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TO BE, OR NOT TO BE——STATEHOOD IS THE QUESTION: ANALYZING THE
ISLAMIC STATE IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

by
Leigh Anne Zook

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies
Croft Institute of International Studies
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College
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Oxford, Mississippi
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ABSTRACT

To be, or not to be——Statehood is the Question: Analyzing the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq

On June 29, 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi officially declared the Islamic State in the Sham (ISIS) as an Islamic Caliphate, and consequently renamed his organization the Islamic State (IS). Over the course of 2014, the IS rose to garner significant international attention, which heightened following direct US military intervention in August 2014 in the form of airstrikes against the IS's targets located in Iraq. Determining if the IS qualifies as a state, from a US perspective, holds significant ramifications for future military and diplomatic interactions with this organization. This analysis brings to light the ongoing issues with appropriately and objectively defining "statehood." Additionally, it demonstrates shortcomings in US military doctrine on fighting state and non-state actors on both strategic and tactical levels. Examining the IS's political, military and economic activities from October 2006 to August 2014 serves the dual purpose of evaluating how "closely" the IS resembles a state and, determining its potential for becoming a state in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, western media and United States policy makers recognize the extremist militant organization currently known as the Islamic State as one of the most dangerous militant organizations in the Middle East. An offshoot of Al Qaeda, the IS may in fact be more dangerous and extreme than Al Qaeda, according to certain news sources.¹ Media coverage in the wake of the IS's summer 2014 advance through Iraq toward Baghdad focused on how the organization seems to have emerged out of "nowhere" and how it resembles a state.² In the midst of the IS's Iraq campaign, the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced on June 29, 2014 that the organization's ultimate goal in Iraq and Syria is to establish an Islamic Caliphate. Historically, a Caliphate is an Islamic political, economic and social entity that functions like a state. In this Islamic "state," al-Baghdadi serves as the self-declared Caliph.³ Further media focus has been paid to the IS's relatively successful military-style tactics, and consequently, its recent territorial gains. Notably, these successes have included the capture of Mosul and consequently the Mosul dam, in June 2014,⁴ as well as the capture of the Baiji oil refinery.⁵ The IS's threat in Northern Iraq ultimately prompted the US to begin conducting airstrikes against the IS on

¹ *CBS News*, "Why ISIS is more dangerous than al Qaeda," 9 August 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/why-isis-is-more-dangerous-than-al-qaeda/>.

² Faysal Itani, "We must treat ISIS like a state to defeat it," *TIME*, 14 August 2014, accessed 15 September 2014 <http://time.com/3111276/isis-terror-iraq-treat-it-like-a-state/>.

³ *Al Jazeera*, "Sunni rebels declare new 'Islamic Caliphate,'" 30 June 2014, accessed 15 September 2014 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isis-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html>.

⁴ Liz Sly, "Insurgents seize Iraqi city of Mosul as security forces flee," 10 June 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgents-seize-iraqi-city-of-mosul-as-troops-flee/2014/06/10/21061e87-8fcd-4ed3-bc94-0e309af0a674_story.html.

⁵ *BBC News*, "Iraq crisis: Key oil refinery 'seized by rebels,'" 24 June 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27990478>.

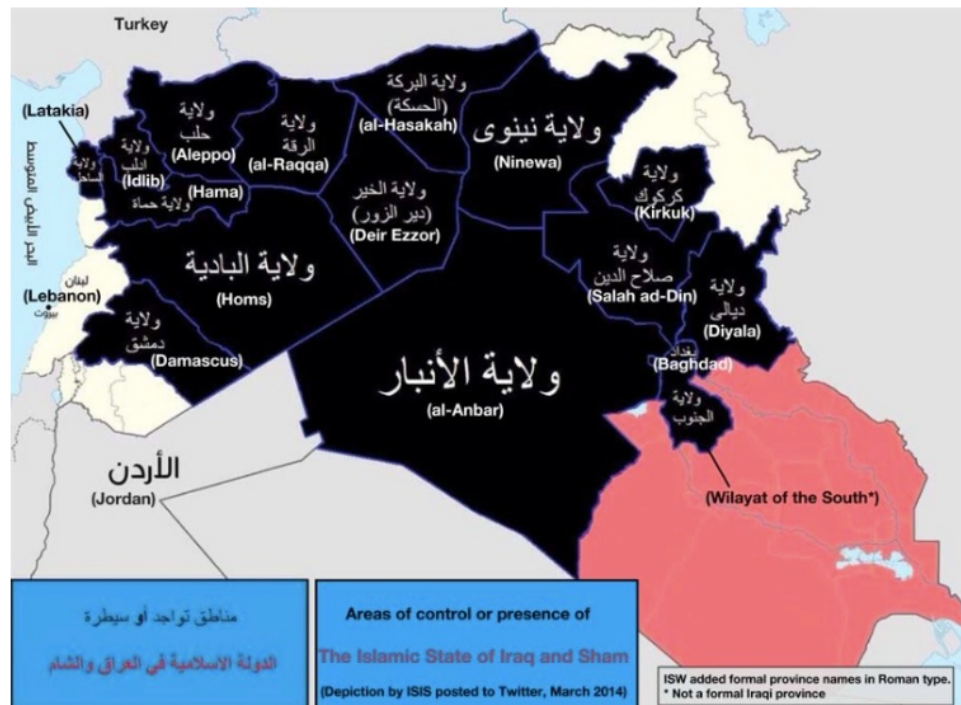
August 8, 2014 to protect US personnel in Erbil, Iraq.⁶ The IS's ability to fairly successfully implement government-like institutions in the territory it controls (such as providing public services, including water) differs from many other militant organizations operating in the Middle East, notably Al Qaeda, as well as the more secular rebel groups operating inside Syria.⁷ The IS's brutal and violent tactics against both its opposition and the residents inside its territory attracts media attention, in addition to creating a refugee crisis as Iraqis and other religious minorities in the IS controlled territory flee their homes. The combination of the IS's ability to capture and maintain territory through decisive military means and its willingness to use violence and brutal tactics demonstrates it has developed into a capable military, if not political, entity.

This thesis examines the research question, "is the Islamic State transitioning from an extremist militant organization to a state?" Inherent in understanding if the IS is currently making this transition, has already made this transition, or will likely make this transition in the future, is determining what defines "statehood." Multiple theories of statehood exist, but can generally be divided into *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty. Since *de jure* sovereignty requires outside state recognition of the aspiring state, and at the time of this thesis no states have recognized the IS as legitimate state, *de facto* sovereignty provides a better means in which to examine the IS. However, *de facto* sovereignty also falls short of adequately characterizing the practical ability of states and non-state actors to maintain effective control over their territory. For this reason, this thesis introduces the concept of three classes of "Hybrid State Entities" in an attempt to more accurately

⁶ *The Guardian*, "US Military ISIS air strikes in Iraq: day-by-day breakdown," accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/aug/27/us-military-isis-air-strikes-in-iraq-day-by-day-breakdown..>

⁷ Jeremy Bender, "ISIS is turning food and water into a weapon in Iraq," 15 August 2014, *Business Insider*, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-has-two-major-weapons-in-iraq-2014-8>.

characterize modern non-state actors and successfully convey their ability to function in many respects, like recognized sovereign states. If the IS is practically functioning as a state, rather than a non-state actor, theoretically this conclusion would have significant ramifications on how the west, and specifically the US, interacts with the IS both now and in the future.



Map produced by The Islamic State to show its presence and administrative divisions in March 2014, before the creation of Furat and Fallujah provinces

Figure 1: Map of the IS's administrative divisions in Syria and Iraq

Source: Barrett, Richard. "The Islamic State." November 2014.

Determining if the IS has an effective governing structure is important in concluding if it qualifies as a Hybrid State Entity or, more generally, as a *de facto* state. An effective governing structure demonstrates that functionally, the IS is able to successfully implement decisions and policies within its territory. Indicators of an effective governing

structure include the presence of effective political, military and economic capacities. Evidence supporting the presence of a political capacity would include evaluating the level of organization of the political structure, the power the political structure has to implement decisions, and the legitimacy of the political structure in the eyes of the population. Indicators of an effective military capacity focus on the ability to control a defined territory and population. This would be demonstrated by the presence of adaptable, modern and successful tactics, as well as a high level of integration between the military apparatus and political system in achieving mutual goals and leadership command. Autonomous political and military capabilities can prove difficult to merge into a single, cohesive entity willing to work in unison for a single goal, or under a single set of leadership. Finally, a state's economic capabilities must adequately fund the state and its activities. Furthermore, examining the feasibility of economic capabilities to continue funding in the future is important to determining the longevity of the state.

Ultimately, determining the most accurate way to characterize the IS depends on its ability to operate as a functional state on a day-to-day basis, as the second half of its moniker seems to suggest. Additionally, establishing how to best characterize state and non-state actors to most accurately reflect the nature of modern political entities becomes paramount, not only to the research covered in this thesis, but also practically in current and future state interactions with other political entities.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Terminology

Throughout this thesis, the organization currently known as the Islamic State will be referred to by several different names. These names reflect the IS's official names over various time periods. Each of these names, and their respective acronyms, will be used to describe the IS in the specific time period in which it existed. Below is list of these time periods and organization titles:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • <i>Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn,</i>
Al Qaeda in Iraq | <i>pre-October 2006</i> |
| • <i>al-Dawlat al- 'Iraq al-Islamiyya,</i>
2013
the Islamic State in Iraq | <i>October 2006-April</i> |
| • <i>al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi Iraq wa ash-Sham,</i>
Islamic State in the Sham | <i>April 2013-June 2014</i> |
| • <i>Dawlat al-Islamiyya, the Islamic State</i> | <i>June 2014-present</i> |

Furthermore, this thesis will refer to the IS as an “extremist militant organization” rather than a terrorist organization. Defining terrorist organizations is very contentious, as a variety of definitions exist, depending on individual nations, groups, organizations, states, and with regards specifically to the US, the particular agency or department (the State Department and Department of Defense, for example, ascribe to slightly different definitions of terrorist organization).⁸ In order to objectively examine the IS and its activities, avoiding confusing or misleading definitions is necessary. The term “extremist militant organization” attempts to convey the extremist nature of the IS's ideology, as

⁸ Leonard Weinburg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, “The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16 (2004). 777.

well as its militant nature as an armed organization, willing and capable of using violence to achieve its goals.

1.2 Origins of the Islamic State

In October 2006, the head of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Abu Ayub al-Masri, formally changed the name of his organization to *al-Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islamiyya*, or the Islamic State in Iraq. This name change, coupled with al-Masri's designation of Iraqi national Abdullah Rishad al-Baghdadi⁹ as the new leader of the ISI, marks a significant change in the history of the organization today known as the Islamic State. Both prior to and after the ISI's 2006 name change, the organization represented Al Qaeda's official affiliate in Iraq. Generally active in the western regions of Iraq, the ISI primarily operated by conducting IED and VBIED attacks against coalition forces.¹⁰ Additionally, AQI targeted many Shiite holy sites; most famously, AQI is known for the bombing of the Askariyah Shrine in Samarra, Iraq in February 2006.¹¹ Although the ISI remained associated with Al Qaeda following its October rebranding, I argue, this name change marks the beginning of the ISI departure from both Al Qaeda leadership and overarching Al Qaeda goals for Iraq. This change ultimately resulted in Al Qaeda retracting its affiliation with the ISI in early 2014, the ISI's second rebranding to the Islamic State in

⁹ Joseph Felter, and Brian Fishman, "Al Qaeda's foreign fighters in Iraq: A first look at the Sinjar records," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 19 December 2007, accessed 3 September 2014, <http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTCForeignFighter.19.Dec07.pdf>.

¹⁰ *The New York Times*, "Attacks that could be contributed to ISIS," 15 June 2014, accessed 1 September 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps-photos-and-video.html?_r=0.

¹¹ Rober F. Worth, "Blast at Shiite Shrine Sets Off Sectarian Fury in Iraq," *The New York Times*, 23 February 2006, accessed 3 September 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/23/world/23iraq.html?pagewanted=all>.

the Sham and ISIS's June 2014 declaration of its goal to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, as well as its most recent title change to the Islamic State.¹²

AQI's 2006 name change to the ISI was important for two main reasons. First and foremost, al-Baghdadi desired to increase popular support for his organization.

Previously AQI had alienated much of the local Iraqi population due to the severity of its attacks, especially its indiscriminate targeting of Shiite civilians in attacks. Al Qaeda's disdain for such tactics was demonstrated in Ayman al-Zawahiri's, the second in command of Al Qaeda, letter to AQI leadership in 2005. Al-Zawahiri scolded the targeting of civilians, both Shiite and Sunni.¹³ Al Qaeda leadership's continued lack of support for the ISI's violent tactics demonstrated a fundamental difference in tactics between the two organizations that continued to cause disagreements in the future. The second aspect of the ISI's rebranding was to create increased focus on the ISI's state building aspirations and solidify its presence as a more permanent, governing force in Iraq. According to the *Washington Post*, by the end of 2006, the majority of the ISI members were of Iraqi origin, as compared to previous years, where the ISI consisted of primarily of foreign fighters.¹⁴ This trend of using foreign fighters persists in the IS's operations to the present day. The majority of foreign fighters employed by the IS are not indigenous to the IS's territory in Iraq or Syria. This suggests that these fighters are

¹² Zack Beauchamp, "17 things about ISIS and Iraq you need to know," Vox, 18 September 2014, accessed 21 September 2014, <http://www.vox.com/cards/things-about-isis-you-need-to-know/what-is-isis>. Ben Hubbard, "Al Qaeda breaks with Jihadist group in Syria involved in rebel infighting," *The New York Times*, 3 February 2014, accessed 29 August 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0.

Matt Bradley, "ISIS declares new Islamic Caliphate," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 June 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/isis-declares-new-islamist-caliphate-1404065263>.

¹³ *The Weekly Standard*. "English translation of Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," 12 October 2005, accessed 22 September 2014, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpuul.asp>.

¹⁴ Greg Bruno, "Profile: Al-Qaeda in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 9 November 2007, accessed 22 September 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/19/AR2007111900721.html>.

fighting for personal gain, rather than a deep-seated commitment to establishing a viable state, for instance, and call into question how far into the future the IS can expect to rely on this force.

At the beginning of 2007, the ISI continued to conduct numerous attacks, many of which targeted Iraqi Sunnis and other minorities in Iraq. This included a series of car bombs in August 2007 responsible for the deaths of 700 people in the Northern Yazidi regions of Iraq.¹⁵ The ISI's attacks helped contribute to the Sunni Awakening, a movement that severely impacted the ISI's abilities to conduct operations and attacks. Reacting to the ISI, Sunni groups throughout Iraq developed Awakening Councils, comprised of tribal and community leaders. These councils worked with US and Coalition forces to help find and destroy the ISI's members and leadership.¹⁶ Additionally, the 2007 surge of over 300,000 US forces helped to limit the ISI's activity and severely impact their ability to effectively operate in Iraq.¹⁷

The Sunni Awakening and Coalition forces' initiatives severely impacted the ISI as an organization. The number of attacks conducted by the ISI dramatically fell, as the ISI's leadership was killed, and the ISI's members were driven from their traditional strongholds.¹⁸ Coalition forces accomplished this in large part through working with "Sahwa" tribal Iraqi security forces to find and destroy the ISI's leadership. For example, Operation Phoenix, beginning in January 2008, specifically targeted the ISI's remaining

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *BBC News*, "Q&A: Iraq's Awakening Councils," 18 July 2010, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10677623/>.

¹⁷ *Council on Foreign Relations*, "Backgrounders," accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state-iraq-syria/p14811>.

¹⁸ Myriam Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa': Its rise and fall," *Middle East Policy Council*, Spring 2011, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.mepec.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/iraqs-tribal-sahwa-its-rise-and-fall?print>.

leadership, and resulted in the capture and death of 92 high-value ISI targets in Iraq.¹⁹ Furthermore, the organization from 2007-2008 was expelled from its traditional strongholds in Anbar province and forced to relocate to Diyala, Salah al-Din, and finally Mosul.²⁰ The period from 2007 to 2008 represented a low point for the ISI, as the ISI's remaining leadership struggled to maintain operations and the ISI's organizational structure.

The ISI remained fairly inactive until the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011. From 2009-2011, the *New York Times* estimates the ISI conducted a total of 198 attacks in Iraq, in comparison to a total of 603 attacks in 2012 alone.²¹ On April 18, 2010, the ISI's leader, Abdullah Rishad al-Baghdadi, was killed in an US Airstrike.²² Consequently, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assumed control as the new leader of the ISI.²³ Al-Baghdadi began to place increased focus on Shiite targets, in addition to attacking local Iraqi military and police offices and checkpoints.²⁴ Furthermore, during this time period, the ISI acquired new fighters in its ranks from the former Sons of Iraq. The Sons of Iraq were groups of Sunni fighters that fought against the AQI and ISI during the Sunni Awakening in the Iraq War. However, failure on behalf of the newly instituted Iraqi government, headed by Prime Minister Maliki, to fully integrate the Sons of Iraq into

¹⁹ Institute for the Study of War, "Operation Phantom Phoenix," accessed 22 September 2014, <https://www.understandingwar.org/operation/operation-phantom-phoenix>.

²⁰ Jessica Lewis, "Al Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent," Institute for the Study of War, September 2013, accessed 26 September 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AQI-Resurgent-10Sept_0.pdf.

²¹ *The New York Times*, "Attacks that could be contributed to ISIS," 15 June 2014, accessed 1 September 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps-photos-and-video.html?_r=0.

²² Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Internet Jihadists react to the death of Al-Qaeda's Leaders in Iraq," Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 30 May 2010, accessed 26 September 2014, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/internet-jihadists-react-to-the-deaths-of-al-qaida's-leaders-in-iraq>.

²³ *BBC News*, "Profile: Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi," 5 July 2014, accessed 16 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27801676>.

²⁴ Bobby Ghosh, "ISIS: A Short History," *The Atlantic*, 14 August 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/isis-a-short-history/376030/>.

military and police forces resulted in distrust and resentment toward the newly established Iraqi government.²⁵ Many former Sons of Iraq members consisted of former soldiers and officers from Saddam's military, and thus provided considerable military expertise and experience to the ISI.

This link between former Iraqi Ba'athists, who worked under Saddam Hussein and adhered to a largely secular religious ideology, and the IS continues to present day. Many high-ranking members of the IS are former Ba'athists, and provide considerable military, political and administrative experience for IS. According to David Kilcullen, an expert on modern insurgencies and guerilla organizations, one of AQI's predominate shortcomings was its lack of administrative operations,

AQI cells were thus cruelly capable at the coercive end of the spectrum, but almost totally lacking in administrative and persuasive capabilities. AQI attempted nothing like formal governance, nor did it ever even try to provide any significant administrative services—it gave no tangible benefits to its supporters or provided no essential support or humanitarian assistance to the Sunni population.²⁶

The organization appears to have remedied this problem during its recent resurgence. The US in part provided the opportunity for the IS's leadership to acquire the skills provided by Ba'athists. During the Iraq war, the US military imprisoned many leaders of AQI, as well as former high-level officials who worked under Saddam Hussein. Several of these individuals found themselves at the same US military prison camps. For example, Abu

²⁵ Stephanie Sanok Kostro, "Resurgence of al Qaeda in Iraq: Effect on Security and Political Stability," 4 March 2014, Accessed 26 September 2014, <http://csis.org/publication/resurgence-al-qaeda-iraq-effect-security-and-political-stability>.

²⁶ David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 138-139.

Bakr al-Baghdadi, the future leader of the IS and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, a former Lt. Col of military intelligence under Saddam Hussein were both detained at Camp Bucca in Iraq.²⁷

The integration of former Ba'athists into the IS's ranks demonstrates that the IS is not simply a religious organization, intent on achieving its goals of creating a Caliphate. It also is pragmatic, recognizing that maintaining successful governance over a territory and a population requires staff and officials who are experienced in performing bureaucratic and administrative tasks. Furthermore, it appears as if in some respects the IS is willing to compromise its religious doctrine in order to gain the experience and expertise of secular counterparts. Even though militant extremists and secular Ba'athists may seem strange bedfellows, their cooperation reveals that the IS is a multifaceted and complex organization, which is willing to reconcile, to some degree, religious differences in order to appeal to Ba'athists and pursue a larger goal of effective governance. By demonstrating that it is willing to compromise its staunch religious leanings with practically administering its territory, the IS proves it understands the necessity of creating and maintaining a functional state in order to achieve its religious goal of creating an Islamic Caliphate.

The ISI began expanding from Iraq into Northern Syria during January 2013, eventually capturing the town of Raqqa in March 2013²⁸ and Azaz in September 2013.²⁹ The ISI continued to push westward towards Aleppo, fighting both Assad regime forces and rebel groups. On April 8, 2013, the ISI once again changed its name to the Islamic

²⁷ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, 20 November 2014.

²⁸ *BBC News*, "Syria Iraq: The Islamic State militant group," 2 August 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24179084>.

²⁹ Paul Wood, "ISIS seizure of Syria's Azaz exposes rebel rifts," *BBC News*, 19 September 2013, accessed September 26, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24160189>.

State in the Sham, sometimes translated to the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant.³⁰

The Arabic term “Sham” refers to an area of land that consists of modern-day Syria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, and a part of southwestern Turkey.³¹

This name change reflects the expansion of the organization’s activities into Syria.

During this time, ISIS also continued its activities in Iraq. ISIS’s “Breaking Walls Campaign” began in July 2012 and consisted of a yearlong series of severe IED and VBIED attacks in Northern and Eastern Iraq.³² Additionally, ISIS conducted eight prison breaks during this campaign. The “Breaking Walls Campaign” in Iraq ended in July 2013 with the ISIS breach of Abu Ghraib prison, resulting in the escape of over 500 prisoners. Many of these prisoners joined ISIS, further boosting the organization’s fighting capacity.³³

ISIS’s independence was confirmed when it officially split with Al Qaeda central leadership in 2014.³⁴ Al-Baghdadi’s disagreements with Al Qaeda began when al-Baghdadi claimed in April 2013 that ISIS had been previously fighting in Syria, through the al-Nusra front. Up to this point, al-Nusra had been Al Qaeda’s affiliate arm in Syria, and was subordinate to general Al Qaeda leadership. However, the leader of al-Nusra, Muhammad al-Jawlani, disagreed with al-Baghdadi and pledged allegiance to al-Zawahiri. In response to this disagreement, al-Zawahiri sent a private message to ISIS

³⁰ Zack Beauchamp, “17 things about ISIS and Iraq you need to know,” Vox, 18 September 2014, accessed 21 September 2014, <http://www.vox.com/cards/things-about-isis-you-need-to-know/what-is-isis>.

³¹ Zack Beauchamp, “ISIS, Islamic State or ISIL? What to call the group the US is bombing in Iraq and Syria,” Vox, 17 September 2014, accessed 9 March 2015, <http://www.vox.com/2014/9/17/6259923/isis-isil-the-islamic-state-daesh-what-is-isis-why-does-obama-use-isil>.

³² Jessica Lewis, “Al Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent,” Institute for the Study of War, September 2013, accessed September 26, 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AQI-Resurgent-10Sept_0.pdf.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ben Hubbard, “Al Qaeda breaks with Jihadist group in Syria involved in rebel infighting,” *The New York Times*, 3 February 2014, accessed 29 August 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0.

and al-Nusra leadership stating that ISIS was to limit its operations in Iraq, change its name, and that al-Nusra was the official Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria, subject only to Al Qaeda central leadership.³⁵ Al-Bahgdadi ultimately rejected al-Zawahiri's decree and continued ISIS operations in Syria. Officially, Al Qaeda renounced affiliation with ISIS in April 2014. This split additionally marked an important shift in how the west viewed Al-Qaeda and the IS. At the time, this split was viewed as a potential sign that under al-Zawahiri's leadership, Al Qaeda was becoming weaker, as it was no longer able to exert control over its regional branches. ISIS was still largely viewed in the context as an extremist rebel group operating in the Syrian Civil War.

At the end of 2013, ISIS maintained strongholds in several Northern Syrian towns including the provincial capital of Raqqa. Reports indicated that ISIS had started to establish public services in these cities, such as an education system, police force and religious courts.³⁶ Moving forward from its success in Northern Syria, ISIS launched an offensive back into Iraq on 30 December 2013 capturing the town of Fallujah on 3 January 2014.³⁷ ISIS's offensive continued in June 2014, when the militant organization conducted a campaign driving further into Iraq, following the Tigris River toward Baghdad. Notably, from 10-13 June, ISIS was able to successfully gain control of

³⁵ Thomas Joscelyn, "Islamic State of Iraq leader defies Zawahiri in alleged audio message," *Long War Journal*, 15 June 2013, accessed 26 September 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/islamic_state_of_ira_3.php.

³⁶ Charles Caris, and Samuel Reynolds, "Middle East Security Report 22: ISIS governance in Syria," Institute for the Study of War. July 2014.

³⁷ Jessica Lewis, "Iraq Update 2014 #1: Showdown in Anbar," Institute for the Study of War, 3 January 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2014/01/showdown-in-anbar.html>. Ahmed Ali, "Iraq Update 2014 #2: Al-Qaeda in Iraq Patrols Fallujah; Aims for Ramadi, Mosul, Baghdad," Institute for the Study of War, 5 January 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2014/01/iraq-update-42-al-qaeda-in-iraq-patrols.html>.

numerous cities, including Mosul, Baiji, Tikrit, Samarra, and Jalawla.³⁸ After being pushed back by Iraqi government and Kurdish forces, IS continued to move south, taking Ishki and Dujali on 14 June.³⁹ ISIS's advance was stopped on the outskirts of Baghdad by the Iraqi army, assisted by Iranian Quds force fighters.⁴⁰ ISIS's summer expansion from 1 June to 6 August in Iraq resulted in over one million people fleeing their homes.⁴¹ In the midst of ISIS's Iraq campaign, al-Baghdadi announced on 29 June ISIS's ultimate goal in Iraq and Syria: to establish an Islamic Caliphate, with al-Baghdadi as Caliph. This declaration also prompted a name change for the organization, ISIS would from that point on, be known simply as the Islamic State.⁴²

With the IS encroachment in Erbil in late July and early August 2014, the US began conducting airstrikes against the IS's targets on 8 August 2014. President Obama stated that his reasoning for beginning the attacks on 8 August, rather than earlier in the IS's campaign, was primarily due to concerns over the security of US consulate workers in Erbil, "in recent days, these terrorists have continued to move across Iraq, and have

³⁸Jeremy Ashkenas, Archie Tse, Derek Watkins, and Karen Yourish, Karen, "A Rouge state along two rivers," *The New York Times*, 3 July 2014, accessed 10 September 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/03/world/middleeast/syria-iraq-isis-rogue-state-along-two-rivers.html>.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Michael R Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "Iran secretly sending drones and supplies into Iraq, US officials say," *The New York Times*, 25 June 2014, Accessed September 26, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/26/world/middleeast/iran-iraq.html?_r=0/.

⁴¹*The New York Times*, "Iraqis driven from their homes by ISIS," 14 August 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps-photos-and-video.html>.

⁴²*Al Jazeera*, "Sunni rebels declare new 'Islamic Caliphate,'" 30 June 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html>.

neared the city of Erbil, where American diplomats and civilians serve at our consulate and American military personnel advise Iraqi forces.”⁴³

US military involvement against the IS marks a definitive point in the history of the IS. By declaring it would use airstrikes to protect its assets, the US acknowledged that the IS posed a strategic and realistic threat. By conducting airstrikes against specific IS targets, the US inadvertently acknowledged that by 8 August 2014, the IS was a capable and dangerous militant organization operating in Iraq and Syria, that was achieving its goals of territorial acquisition.

In summary, whether the IS’s activity up to the US airstrikes on 8 August 2014 represents the pinnacle of the IS’s power in Iraq remains to be seen; however, the change which the organization underwent from 2006 to 2014 provides a wide-ranging scope in which to examine both the IS’s evolution in capabilities and state-building potential. It is undeniable that the IS has made a great transition from the militant organization weakened in the aftermath of the Sunni Awakening to one of the most successful militant organizations in the Middle East, able to dually acquire territory and conduct threatening attacks. Ultimately, the IS appears to be operating in a different manner than its militant counterparts in Iraq and Syria, as it makes considerable effort to begin instituting several state-like governing institutions in its territories, such as establishing key infrastructure, water, agricultural systems, and oil refineries.⁴⁴ These natural resources allow the IS to further control its population, as the state first and foremost controls basic necessities,

⁴³ Barak Obama, “Statement by the President,” The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 7 August 2014, accessed 15 September 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president>.

⁴⁴ Richard Barrett, “The Islamic State,” The Soufan Group, November 2014, 42.

like food and water, required by the population. The population thus becomes dependent on the IS for survival.

1.3 Creating the ‘Caliphate’

After breaking from Al Qaeda, the IS began campaigns to acquire territory in Syria and Iraq, maintaining its ultimate goal is to create an Islamic Caliphate, akin to the Caliphates under the Muslim Imams in the 2nd century. In such a Caliphate, Islamic Sharia law is the ultimate law of the land, with severe repercussions for those who break those laws.⁴⁵ The IS seeks to create an Islamic Sunni state, but is willing to target Sunni residents who do not abide by Sharia law. As the current head of the IS, al-Baghdadi serves as a self-declared Caliph in the IS Caliphate. Additionally, the IS appears to be targeting religious minorities in the region that do not subscribe to Sunni Islam, such as Yazidis and Christians.⁴⁶ The predominant religious and ideological differences between the IS and its respective Islamic extremist militant counterparts, such as Al Qaeda, largely lie in the tactics the IS employs and its ultimate goal of establishing the “one true” Islamic Caliphate.

Historically, the term “Caliphate” refers to the Islamic institution that was established following the emergence of Islam as a religion in seventh-century Arabia. After the death of Mohammad in 632 AD, the Islamic religious community was in need of leadership. The first four Caliphs, or leaders of the Caliphate, were selected from among Mohammad’s close followers. A split in the Islamic community occurred when

⁴⁵Max Fisher, “9 Questions about the ISIS caliphate you were too embarrassed to ask,” Vox, 7 August 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/7/10/5884593/9-questions-about-the-caliphate-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask>.

⁴⁶Joshua Berlinger, “Who are the religious and ethnic groups under threat from ISIS?” CNN, 8 August 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/meast/iraq-ethnic-groups-under-threat-isis/>.

one faction insisted that the Caliphs should follow Mohammad's bloodline through his cousin Ali, rather than his disciples.⁴⁷ This split created the Shiite faction, whose followers believe that the Caliphs should follow Mohammad's bloodline. The IS perpetrates a highly romanticized portrait of the Caliphate that focuses not only on creating an ideal form of governance, but also a Sunni Muslim Community that is monolithic and united.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the IS bases its interpretation of a Caliphate on a largely inaccurate historical depiction of the Caliphates that, according to Furlow, Fleischer and Corman, professors of strategic communication, "portray[s] the Caliphate as a glorious, shining kingdom on a hill, while editing out inconvenient historical details about the infighting, assassination, civil war, and territorial losses that plagued the Caliphates."⁴⁹

Caliphates were entities that incorporated both Islam and governance. The ruler of this institution provided the overarching leadership to both religious and political aspects of this state-like entity. For example, during the rule of the Ottoman Empire from 1299 to 1924, the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph served as the dual head of government and Islamic community. Conveniently, the IS shies away from discussing the internal issues that plagued Caliphates, and instead focuses on how the West contributed to the downfall of the Caliphate. For example, the IS argues that the downfall of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 led to Muslim subjugation by western colonial powers, but ignores the difficulties the Ottoman Empire faced economically in the century leading up to Atatürk's creation

⁴⁷ Carool Kersten, "Explaining the Caliphate," Kings College London News, 4 July 2014, accessed 1 February 2015, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/newsevents/news/newsrecords/2014/July/Explaining-The-Caliphate.aspx>.

⁴⁸ Bennet R. Furlow, Kristen Fleischer, and Steven R Corman, "De-Romantisizing The Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate," Arizona State University Center for Strategic Communication, 1402 (2014).

⁴⁹ Ibid 2.

of the Republic of Turkey in 1924. Even though the IS focuses on the largely religious nature of Caliphates and their successes, it should also be noted that the numerous issues Caliphates faced are the same as those faced by nation-states and political institutions. The Caliph and his Caliphate had to dually incorporate pragmatic aspects of governance, such as a viable economic system, and maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of its population, as well as religious aspects of governance, in order to maintain a functional governing entity.

From a religious point of view, creating an all-encompassing Islamic Caliphate, according to Dr. Carool Kersten of King's College London's Theology and Religious Studies Department, is "rather grandiose and utopian."⁵⁰ Ultimately, the IS's version of the Caliphate ignores the historical diversities in nationality and ethnicity among Muslims in favor of promoting a unified and all-encompassing religious and political governing entity.⁵¹ This seems like an overly optimistic way in which to create a functional governing entity, as erasing these differences could prove extremely difficult. However, from a practical and pragmatic point of view, declaring a Caliphate allows the IS to give legitimacy to its territorial acquisitions. Since the IS's territory is carved from that of existing territory from the recognized nation-states of Iraq and Syria, it must prove that the institution it is creating is on par with those of states. The Caliphate provides this alternative.

In creating a Caliphate, the IS is attempting to achieve two main goals. Its first objective is to establish Islamic governance through Sharia law. The IS ascribes to Sunni

⁵⁰ Kersten, "Explaining the Caliphate."

⁵¹ Furlow, R. Bennett, Fleishcher, Kristen, and Corman, Steven R. "De-Romanticizing The Islamic State's Vision of the Caliphate." Arizona State University Center for Strategic Communication. Report No. 1402. 27 October 2014.

Wahabism and the Islamic concept of *Takfir*.⁵² The IS uses Wahhabi ideology to explain its use of violent tactics to “purify” Muslim societies that have become sinful.⁵³ *Takfir* is a specific doctrine that allows Muslims to declare fellow Muslims as infidels if they fail to adhere to specific tenets of Islam, and therefore, become legitimate targets for Jihad. In this way, the IS proves it has a desire to govern a population according to a specific political doctrine, and likewise implement social change to accomplish this. Secondly, the IS attempts to build legitimacy in the eyes of its population by implementing various social projects in its territory. It becomes evident through the IS’s actions that the organization wants to be a functional governing authority, and is going to great lengths to achieve this goal. In the practical sense, a Caliphate, like a modern state, seeks to effectively govern a specific population living in a specific territory. Additional analysis of what constitutes a modern state will be provided in Chapter 2. The IS is in comparison to other extremist militant organizations, such as Hezbollah, which is often touted as a “state within a state,”⁵⁴ yet does not claim statehood. The IS’s outward claims to establishing a Caliphate, do generally, extend to the entire Muslim world;⁵⁵ however, in the immediate term, the IS seems mainly concerned with gaining and maintaining its territory in Syria and Iraq. This plan is corroborated by the simple fact that the IS’s complex efforts in building effective governance are applied to its current territory. So

⁵² Alastair Crooke has written a detailed explanation of IS’s Islamic Ideology: Alastair Crooke, “You can’t understand ISIS if you don’t know the history of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia,” *The Huffington Post*, 27 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html.

⁵³ David D. Kirkpatrick, “ISIS’ harsh brand of Islam is rooted in austere Saudi creed,” *The New York Times*, 24 September 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/isis-abu-bakr-baghdadi-caliph-wahhabi.html?_r=0.

⁵⁴ *Council on Foreign Relations*, “Backgrounders: Hezbollah,” accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155?breadcrumb=%2F>.

⁵⁵ For more information on IS’s historical claims to territory, refer to: al-‘Ubaydi et al., “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State.” 18. Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi, “A message to the mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the month of Ramadan,” translated by Al-Hayat Media Center, 5 July 2014, 3.

far, similar efforts at creating and enforcing governance are not being applied to expansions of territory outside of Syria and Iraq, such as in North Africa, for instance.

Furthermore, a Caliphate harnesses legitimacy through an Islamic discourse, allowing the IS to circumvent establishing its legitimacy as a “state,” as defined by international law. Even though in a practical sense, a Caliphate embodies many of the same characteristics as a modern nation-state, it remains separate because it ascribes to the pursuit of creating an all-encompassing Islamic identity. Because of this, establishing legitimacy as a functional governing authority only does not entail establishing legitimacy as a modern state, as defined by international law, and ascribed to by the current international community, which consists of states, and non-state actors. Given its commitment to violence and lack of regard for upholding general human rights, it is highly unlikely that the IS desires membership among recognized states in the UN, for example. However, it still desires governance, and the creation of an institution that practically resembles a state. Even though the IS appeals to a strictly religious discourse, rather than the secular discourse of international law, does this make it any less state-like? The IS’s state-building aspirations should not be discounted simply because it refuses to ascribe to popular notions of statehood. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the way in which the IS acts as an effective governing authority, that is, outside of usual conceptions of what constitutes modern states, is not adequately described by existing definitions of states and non-state actors.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Determining how to best evaluate the components of a modern state requires analysis of multiple definitions on how a state forms, the characteristics of a modern state, and how a state retains its statehood. Specific focus will be paid to *de facto* definitions of sovereignty because the IS is not currently recognized by any sovereign states officially as a state, and it seems rather unlikely that official recognition of the IS sovereignty will occur in the near future. Therefore, evaluating the IS on *de jure* criteria will not produce adequate insight into truly understating the IS's capacity to exist and function as a state. This thesis proposes the use of three distinct classes of Hybrid State Entities (HSEs) as a means to adequately define and characterize modern state and non-state actors. Generally, sovereignty, although a broad concept, entails legitimate authority, "authority is 'the right to command, and correlatively, the right to be obeyed,' and it is legitimate when it is seen as right by those living under it."⁵⁶ Sovereign entities must therefore possess some kind of authority, and through this exhibition of authority, the sovereign entity gains legitimacy.⁵⁷

2.1 Defining Sovereignty

Numerous discrepancies exist as to which entity is responsible for determining the ultimate sovereignty of the state, be it the international community of existing states, or self-determinism of the aspiring state itself. Steven Krasner, a professor of international

⁵⁶ Sohail H Hashmi, *State Sovereignty: Change and Persistence in International Relations* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 17.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

relations at Stanford University and former director of Policy Planning at the US State Department, outlines the different spheres of sovereignty that exist: international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty. International legal sovereignty “refers to the practices associated with mutual recognition, usually between territorial entities that have formal juridical interdependence,”⁵⁸ and is thus associated with the concept that entities must meet a specific legal definition in order to be considered “sovereign.” An example of this is simply the recognition afforded to member states of the United Nations. Westphalian sovereignty also entails meeting specific criteria, as sovereign entities must be responsible for their own actions through the creation of a political structure, “Westphalian sovereignty refers to political organization based on the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory.”⁵⁹ This type of sovereignty therefore requires a political structure responsible for maintaining authority in its territory, without the influence of outside actors or states. In reality, this entails non-intervention from other states. The final two types of sovereignty Krasner discusses relate to an entity’s ability to establish authority within their territory. Domestic sovereignty “refers to the formal organization of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity.”⁶⁰

Essentially, sovereign entities must be able to control what happens within their defined borders. Internal governance can occur under many different types of governance; for instance, in some states, a presidency is the means of governance, while in others, it is a dictatorship. Sovereign entities must also, under the auspices of

⁵⁸ Stephen D Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

interdependence sovereignty, “regulate the flow of information, ideas, goods, people, pollutants, or capital across the borders of their state.”⁶¹ Similar to Westphalian sovereignty in the sense that a state must maintain authority of its territory, interdependence sovereignty establishes the idea that a state must take responsibility for what crosses its borders. Krasner explains this form of sovereignty using the example of the effects of globalization on states, “when people say globalization is eroding sovereignty, what they mean is you can't control capital flows, you can't control migration, you can't control ideas.”⁶² The combination of these categories of sovereignty demonstrates the presence of numerous definitions of sovereignty, as well as criteria in which to evaluate a states’ possession, or lack thereof, of sovereignty. However, these four definitions do highlight the reoccurring themes of territorial control and independent governing structure in determining an entity’s sovereignty. In regards to analyzing the IS’s potential statehood, Westphalian, domestic and interdependence sovereignty will likely be the most pertinent. The combination of these theories of sovereignty strongly correlates to establishing effective governance over a specific population in a designated territory. International legal sovereignty, however, pertains largely to meeting specific criteria on statehood, and being recognized as a state, which the IS will undoubtedly fail to accomplish.

2.2 State Actions

In addition to characterizing states based on their spheres of sovereignty, states may also be defined according to what actions they conduct. The sociologist, political

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Harry Kreisler, “Stephen D. Krasner Interview: Conversations with History; Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley,” 2003, accessed 30 November 2014, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Krasner/krasner-con3.html>.

scientist and historian Charles Tilly outlines four different activities that states must undertake: war making, state making, “protection,” and “extraction.”⁶³ States must be able to wage war, which constitutes eliminating or neutralizing rivals outside a state’s territory. “State making” is also necessary, where entities must eliminate or neutralizes rivals inside their territory in order to retain a monopoly on authority. Protection involves eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of state clients. These “clients” are essentially the enemies of a state’s residents and allies to the state. The final action states must undertake entails “acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities-war making, state making and protection” which Tilly defines as “extraction.”⁶⁴ Much like Krasner’s different types of sovereignty, Tilly’s description of state actions also focuses on the importance of establishing authority both inside and outside state territory.

2.3 de jure and de facto sovereignty

As evidenced by both Krasner and Tilly, there are countless ways to define and determine what actions or criteria might be needed to successfully characterize a state as sovereign, possessing authority, and maintaining legitimacy, both inside and outside its borders. Furthermore, the question arises of exactly how many or how few of these attributes an aspiring state must meet in order to be considered a state. Determining a means by which to characterize state activities is necessary in order to best understand the components of sovereignty. The two categories that can be effectively used to group sovereign state characteristics include *de jure* sovereignty and *de facto* sovereignty. *De jure* sovereignty refers to an entity being sovereign based on a legal set of criteria, as exemplified in Krasner’s definitions of Westphalian and international legal sovereignty.

⁶³Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). 181.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Conversely, *de facto* sovereignty encompasses an entity's actions that demonstrate it is a state in practice, but not necessarily a state as defined by legal criteria. Rather than including a specific number of designated criteria (such as the four criteria outlined by Krasner and Tilly), the categories of *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty can include a broader range of activities and evidence that provides proof an entity exists as a sovereign state.

De jure sovereignty requires specific legal criteria in which to evaluate if an entity meets qualifications for statehood. The generally approved source for these criteria is the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1933. This treaty was signed by 19 states during the International Conference of American States in Montevideo, Uruguay, and went into effect in December 1934. The criteria established in the Montevideo Convention were further established as legitimate means to determine statehood, in the realm of international law, through their registration in the *League of Nations Treaty Series* in January 1936.⁶⁵ According to the Montevideo Convention, “states as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) permanent population (b) defined territory (c) government and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.”⁶⁶ These four criteria provide general direction on what, according to the international community, constitutes a sovereign state.

Even though the criteria established by the Montevideo Convention appear fairly explicit in their meaning, significant debate exists on who, or what, actually determines if an aspiring state meets the legal definitions for statehood. This debate revolves around

⁶⁵ Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 26 December 1934, accessed 13 September 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/sovereignty/montevideo-convention-rights-duties-states/p15897>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

the importance of recognizing a state as meeting the criteria.⁶⁷ The two competing theories regarding recognition are the constitutive and declaratory theories.

Essentially, these competing views attempt to determine “whether recognition by other states is ‘constitutive’ of the existence of a legal entity or merely ‘declaratory’ of its existence.”⁶⁸ The constitutive theory therefore states that in addition to these four criteria, aspiring states need to gain recognition from other previously existing sovereign states.⁶⁹

Recognition of the state can be demonstrated by admitting an aspiring state to an international organization; for example, Ethiopia was recognized as a state through its admittance to the League of Nations in 1923. Conversely, the declaratory theory postulates that entities only need to possess the four criteria outlined in the Montevideo Convention in order to become a state. Brad R. Roth, a professor of political science, maintains that the main strength of the declaratory theory is “its denial to states of the rights to determine, even collectively, the legal status of an entity according to their own political convenience” and thus attempts to provide an objective means of determining statehood.⁷⁰ The territory of Transnistria in Moldova provides an example of the declaratory theory of statehood. Transnistria has remained independent since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and meets all four criteria provided by the Montevideo Convention, as it possesses a territory, permanent population, government and has

⁶⁷ Stefan Talmon, *Recognition of Governments in International Law: With Particular Reference to Governments in Exile* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 23.

⁶⁸ Brad R Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 123.

⁶⁹ Amy E. Eckert, “Constructing States: The role of the international community in the creation of new states,” *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 13 (2002), accessed September 16, 2014, <https://www.princeton.edu/jpia/past-issues-1/2002/2.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law*, 128.

entered into relations with other states, namely Russia.⁷¹ Despite meeting these criteria, Transnistria remains a territory, rather than a state, due to a lack of recognition. However, the shortcomings of the declaratory theory rest in its disregard that very rarely, do aspiring states clearly and fully fill all criteria for statehood. Bridget Coggins, a political scientist, argues, “external politics, not only facts on the ground, determine state birth” and ultimately, “independence projects falter if they cannot secure external legitimacy.”⁷² Even if aspiring states do meet the declaratory theory’s qualifications for statehood, without outside recognition of sovereignty (and therefore, legitimacy), states are unlikely to be successful for sustained periods of time. It appears a combination of outside recognition and meeting the Montevideo Convention criteria is necessary for entities to be realistically defined as sovereign states. However, the degree of importance afforded to recognition versus meeting international legal criteria is still largely up to debate.

The second method for determining statehood lies in *de facto* sovereignty, or the effective control an aspiring state holds over its territory. This method is more applicable to judging the IS’s statehood because it examines if an entity practically functions as a state. This is because *de facto* sovereignty pays credence to what the aspiring state is doing on the ground, inside and outside its own territory, and thus, largely relies on the reactions of the people living inside the governed territory to determine effectiveness of rule. The Republic of Somaliland provides an example of *de facto* statehood. Somaliland is a self-declared autonomous region of Somalia, but remains unrecognized by any

⁷¹ Jos Boonstra, “Moldova, Transnistria and European Democracy Policies,” Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, February 2007, accessed 30 November 2014, http://fride.org/download/COM_Moldav_ENG_feb07.pdf.

⁷² Bridget Coggins, “Friends in High Places,” *International Organization* 65 (2011): 435.

member of the United Nations.⁷³ However, the Republic of Somaliland maintains *de facto* control over its territory; Somaliland has its own political system with executive, legislative and judicial branches, issues its own passports, and has maintained safety and stability inside its territory.⁷⁴

Residents' reactions help determine if habitual obedience to the authority of the state exists.⁷⁵ In reality, it seems very rare that sovereign states' populations completely consent to being governed. Opposition factions almost always exist, yet many entities are still considered to be sovereign without the entire population's full consent to being governed. The distinction if residents comply with a governing structure through fear of personal harm, coercion by the government, or in support of the ruling entity becomes irrelevant. The fact that residents are simply abiding by the authority of the ruling government with minimal protests or revolts demonstrates that, to a certain degree, a governing structure does hold effective control over its territory.

2.4 Implications of Statehood on US Military Actions and Diplomacy

Evaluating the IS through the *de facto* definition of state sovereignty provides the best means for determining if it is functionally a state. Functionality provides important implications for US policy makers, both in the political and military realms in how to best interact with the IS currently and in the future. How an entity is regarded by other sovereign states will determine the means in which a state chooses to interact with the entity. A sovereign state, may, for instance, resort to military solutions more quickly than diplomatic negotiations with an entity it does not consider it to be a sovereign state.

⁷³ *BBC News*, "Somaliland Profile," 13 November 2013, accessed 30 November 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115069>.

⁷⁴ Marc Lacey, "The signs say Somaliland, but the world says Somalia," *The New York Times*, 5 June 2006, Accessed 30 November 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/05/world/africa/05somaliland.html?_r=0.

⁷⁵ Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law*, 139.

Furthermore, the military techniques a state may choose to use may change with recognition of sovereignty or lack thereof. If the IS functionally operates as a *de facto* state, understanding the multi-faceted ways in which the IS appears legitimate to its populations, as well as the governance it provides to the populations residing in its territory are integral to devising appropriate military and diplomatic strategies to combat the IS.

Since this thesis will address the ramifications of the IS's statehood in regards to the US, examining the way in which the US theoretically wages war is necessary to understanding the importance of determining the IS's statehood. The United States' military doctrine contains two predominant types of warfare, traditional warfare and irregular warfare. The doctrine for the US armed forces characterizes traditional warfare as "a violent struggle for domination between nation-state(s) or coalitions and alliances of nation-states," with the strategic purpose of warfare being "the imposition of a nation's will on its adversary nation-state(s) and the avoidance of its will being imposed on [it]."⁷⁶ Conversely, irregular warfare is defined as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations [...] the strategic point of IW is to gain or maintain influence over, and the support of, a relevant population."⁷⁷ As evidenced by these two distinct definitions, the US military takes different approaches to dealing with traditional and irregular warfare, "each [type of warfare] serves a fundamentally different strategic purpose that drives different approaches to its conduct."⁷⁸ The definitions of warfare are also tied to whether or not an entity is

⁷⁶ United States Government, *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, 25 March 2013, I-5.

⁷⁷ Ibid, I-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid, I-5.

characterized as a state, since traditionally, strong states are more willing to engage in traditional conventional warfare, while weak non-state actors are more likely to engage in irregular warfare. The US armed forces doctrine does realistically note that “warfare is a united whole, incorporating all its aspects together, traditional and irregular. It is, in fact, the creative, dynamic, and synergistic combination of both that is usually most effective.”⁷⁹ These two distinct definitions on when to theoretically use each type of warfare demonstrates that the US military is pre-disposed to utilizing different military tactics depending on the sovereignty of the enemy.

Furthermore, it is in the US’s best interest not to recognize the IS as a state. By subjectively choosing which non-state entities it recognizes as states, the US directly dictates how it is able to militarily and diplomatically engage these actors. States are afforded specific rights under the Geneva Convention, which non-state actors do not have.⁸⁰ Since the US military must follow the Laws of War, it behooves the US to continue to term the IS as a non-state actor.

Also at play is the modern battlefield in which today, most military threats states face come from new dimensions other than traditional military threats from opposing sovereign states. These threats can include cyber warfare, transnational warfare and civil war. States today must determine “how to balance, prioritize, promote, and protect interests along several different dimensions (economic, environmental, etc.), while military security against a powerful, aggressive sovereign state enemy is more assured

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Geneva Convention relating to the treatment of Prisoners of War, 75 U.N.T.S. 135, entered into force 21 October 1950.

than ever.”⁸¹ Since modern sovereign states, especially world powers like the US, generally do not face overt military threats, such as invasion by a foreign army, “resources, political will, and political consensus available for the fight are greatly reduced.”⁸² This influences a state’s willingness to recognize outside entities, since “it is hard for policymakers and the public to take seriously the threats which flow from weak states as opposed to strong states.”⁸³ The US may therefore be less inclined to recognize a non-state actor, since policymakers view an entity without a strong conventional army (traditionally characteristic of states) as less of a threat. Such a line of thinking is problematic, however, as aspiring states may successfully utilize non-traditional warfare tactics that demonstrate effective control over military and territory. Recognition therefore becomes a dual question of political perceptions regarding the capabilities of a non-state actor, and the actual military actions the actor is able to produce.

This line of thinking also has a bearing on the political and diplomatic realm. States, in recognizing an aspiring state as sovereign, would consequently establish official relations with the newly recognized state. In times of conflict between the recognizing state and the recognized state, treaties or bargaining may be pursued through official diplomatic channels. Both entities may thus be more pre-disposed to finding a peaceful solution through diplomatic means, rather than resort to military means to resolve the conflict. However, when a state is not recognized as sovereign, existing sovereign states may be more willing to resort to military means over diplomatic means to arrive at a solution. States that are determined to be sovereign entertain greater

⁸¹ Maryann K. Cusimano, *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a global agenda* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000), 33.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

opportunity to engage in a variety of diplomatic and military interactions with other sovereign states, in comparison to non-state entities. Therefore, determining if an entity can actually be characterized as a state has significant ramifications on the future interactions with this entity and other international actors.

2.5 Internal and External Actions

Examining both the internal and external actions of a political entity to determine if it possesses state sovereignty is important in order to gain a comprehensive view of an entity's legitimacy, both inside and outside its borders. As Roth describes,

Legitimacy [...] arises as a question from two distinct perspectives: the internal and the external. On the one hand, ought the putative authority to be regarded as legitimate by those subject to it? On the other hand, ought the putative authority to be regarded as legitimate by outside entities?⁸⁴

The 'internal' category refers to an entity's actions regarding the residents inside its territory, "internal sovereignty consists in the exercise of effective and independent government control, over a population, on a generally marked-out territory."⁸⁵ Whether or not an aspiring state can dually create and enforce its goals is tantamount to determining if it can actually function. Furthermore, if a population generally abides by the law designated by the aspiring state, it follows that to a certain degree the population recognizes the governing entity as legitimate. This is because "effective governmental control is extremely difficult to maintain without the consent of at least part of the population."⁸⁶ A government's ability to control the population brings about the issue of whether or not a government can still be considered legitimate if it is ruling unjustly, for

⁸⁴ Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law*, 19.

⁸⁵ Thierry Baudet, *The Significance of borders: why representative government and the rule of law require nation states*, (Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2012), 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 43.

instance. Thierry Baudet, a Dutch historian, addresses this issue, maintaining that a state's ultimate authority over territory is the determiner for legitimacy, "should a government rule unjustly and undermine [the state's] 'authority' in the sense of being respected or held in high esteem, [the state] would nevertheless retain [its] 'right to decide' as long as [it] maintained [its] effective control."⁸⁷ In this case, 'right to decide' refers to a government's ability to make decisions about what sort of actions it desires to take or undertake, as far as governing its territory. Even though a population may not explicitly consent to governance, it implicitly consent to being governed by submitting to a state's authority.

External sovereignty, on the other hand, refers more simply to how an aspiring state's actions are perceived by outsiders, such as entering in relations with other states or non-state actors. External sovereignty is therefore "the acceptance of a state by others."⁸⁸ Both external and internal sovereignty are ultimately related to *de facto* sovereignty definitions of statehood, "when an organization succeeds in establishing internal sovereignty, it has gained a *de facto* capacity to inter into relations with other states [...] so the entity is viewed as a sovereign state."⁸⁹ Examining an aspiring state's actions on both an internal and external level are necessary in determining if the entity can be considered sovereign. If an actor is only able to maintain *de facto* sovereignty over either internal or external affairs exclusively, it may not be considered to be a *de facto* state. However, exhibiting one of the two categories could serve as an indicator that an actor is attempting to transition to *de facto* statehood. At the time of this thesis, the IS does

⁸⁷ Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law*, 43.

⁸⁸ Baudet, *The Significance of borders: why representative government and the rule of law require nation states*, 51.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

interact with outside actors occasionally; however these interactions are of a limited nature and thus far, do not include interactions with sovereign states. Interaction is limited predominantly to military negotiations with tribal leaders and conducting oil transactions, and building alliances with outside militant groups. According to Phillip Potter, a political scientist, the IS's relationships with other militant organizations are "unusually broad, but also somewhat shallow. That is, [the IS] has many relationships with other militant organizations, but a disproportionate number of them have proven transitory and fragile [...] other militants have had little choice but to engage with [the IS] given its strength but have kept some distance out of fear for their organizational autonomy over the long run."⁹⁰ Due to a lack of detailed information regarding the IS's interactions with outside actors, in addition to the quickly changing and often fragile nature of these relationships, analysis of the IS's political, military and economic characteristics will focus on activities conducted within the IS's territory, rather than outside. Additionally, *de facto* sovereignty's lack of explicit criteria on the exact amount of internal versus external actions a state must engage in demonstrates the deficiencies in attempting to accurately define statehood.

2.6 Political, Military and Economic Characteristics

Characteristics used to judge an aspiring state's internal and external sovereignty can be further broken down into three categories: political, military and economic. Political characteristics would include any activities related to the development of a means to create and administer authority or laws, including a legislature, judicial system, law enforcement mechanism, as well as attempts to create and sustain a governing

⁹⁰Philip Potter, "ISIL's Inter-Organizational Relationships: Conflict and Cooperation," SOCCENT Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL, December 2014, 65.

structure, which may include institutions and the development of bureaucracy. Although a ‘government’ may entail many different facets, generally the UN General Assembly Official Records recognizes a government if it “exercises effective control and authority over all or nearly all of the national territory, and has the obedience of the bulk of the population of that territory in such a way that this control, authority, and obedience appear to be of a permanent character.”⁹¹ In this way, administrative or bureaucratic structures may be the means in which a government seeks to maintain the obedience and control of its population. Also entailed in the political category would be the diplomatic relations or interactions between the aspiring state and outside political actors (such as sovereign states and non-state actors). An analysis of the IS’s political characteristics can be found in Chapter 3.

The military category would encompass any activities an aspiring state would undertake to develop and maintain a successful military mechanism, be it a conventional or non-conventional military. The relative success afforded to the military in both operations inside and outside the state’s territory would be important, as well as the effectiveness of the military in achieving its goals. Since one of the fundamental aspects of creating a state is maintaining a specific territory and borders, a military apparatus often becomes the means with which to achieve this characteristic. Even though modern military conflicts utilize new types of warfare (such as cyber warfare) and thus negate the traditional importance of territorial acquisition,⁹² the ability to maintain territory remains a keystone to achieving statehood. The success of IS’s military capabilities will be examined in depth in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁹¹ Roth, *Governmental Illegitimacy in International Law*, 27.

⁹² Hendrik Spruyt, “Origins and Development of the State,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002): 143.

The final category involves the economic characteristics of an aspiring state. Developing a sustainable and effective economic system is a necessary component to creating a functioning state. Without a source of income, neither a political nor military apparatus can exist. Some credence may be given to the means in which an entity raises funds, for example, levying taxes on a population might be construed as a more legitimate means of income than engaging in international arms smuggling. Economic characteristics also fall into broader internal and external categories, as international trade agreements and selling of natural resources to foreign actors would take place on an international scale. Even though globalization has increased the interconnectedness of economies between states, and therefore provides less of an opportunity for governments to definitively establish their own economic policies, the fact still remains that states must have an economy in order to function.⁹³ Furthermore, interaction with an aspiring-state's economy in the global realm would provide indication that the entity is able to enter relations with other states, and therefore possess a financial base for funding state activities. The IS's economic activity will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

2.7 Hybrid State Entities

Additionally, this thesis will analyze the definitional issues in characterizing states, *de facto* states, and non-state actors like the IS. Currently, the US military uses the term "hybrid threat" to attempt to characterize entities that do not meet otherwise established of conventional or unconventional threats. However, "hybrid" does not seem to adequately define the IS's nature or characteristics, due to the ambiguity of the definition, "the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, and/or criminal elements unified to achieve mutually benefiting

⁹³ Ibid, 144.

effects.”⁹⁴ A new term should be used to accurately describe political entities that are typically characterized as non-state actors, but practically meet the definitions of a *de facto* state. This thesis proposes the use of a new definition, “Hybrid State Entity” and three respective classes of Hybrid State Entities, to more accurately define actors like the IS in the future. “Hybrid” connotes the idea that these actors exhibit a variety of activities and characteristics typically associated with both states and non-state actors in politics, military actions, and economics. “State” is in reference to the idea that in many instances, these entities often look more like states, rather than organizations with minimal capabilities to maintain effective control or governance. When attempting to interact with these hybrid actors, their capabilities in state building need to be considered equally along with their military successes, for instance. Finally, the addition of “entity” incorporates the reality that these entities are not fully states in the international-law sense, as they are not fully recognized members of the UN. Furthermore, since these actors are not fully-fledged states, they need not be afforded the same rights as states in Laws of War, for instance. In full, the term Hybrid State Entity attempts to encompass the aspects of actors on a more specific level than “non-state actor.” Furthermore, Hybrid State Entities can be classified in three different categories, depending on the level of governance and control they have over their respective territories:

Class I Hybrid State Entity-In essence, a *de facto* state. Demonstrates very strong control of territory and population. Presence of a stable economic system and is able to consistently generate revenue. Has a monopoly on the use of violence and is unlikely to be internally contested militarily or politically (ex. Taiwan, Kurdistan, Palestine, Hezbollah).

⁹⁴ Headquarters, US Army, “ADRP 1-02 Terms and Military Symbols,” September 2013, 1-29.

Class II Hybrid State Entity-Exhibits some characteristics of a *de facto* state. Has control of majority of its territory and population. Has a fairly stable economic system and means of generating revenue. Generally effective in subduing internal military or political opposition, but may face some difficulties maintaining a monopoly on the use of force throughout all of its territory (ex. Kachin State, Abkhazia).

Class III Hybrid State Entity-A weak *de facto* state. Has control over limited portions of its territory and population. Faces significant challenges to authority from internal military and political threats, and struggles to defend against these threats. Has a weak and/or unstable economic system and may face difficulties in generating revenue. Only maintains a monopoly on the use of force in small portions of territory, or does not exhibit a monopoly on the use of force at all (ex. Sinaloa Federation, Nagorno-Karabakh).

The three classes of Hybrid State Entities are fluid categories, in which entities can transition from one class to the next, as they develop or lose their capabilities. The following chapters of this thesis will provide additional analysis as to how the IS successfully represents a Class II Hybrid State Entity, and how this definition provides a more accurate depiction of the IS than existing definitions and theories regarding statehood.

2.8 Methodology

The sources used in this thesis consist of an array of academic articles, news reports, open-source intelligence reporting, social media and other primary source publications directly from the IS. The recent and emerging nature of subject matter regarding the IS poses a challenge to attaining and using relevant and adequate academic

scholarship. For this reason, a number of different sources are used to provide a holistic approach to characterizing the IS.

Academic articles constitute the main basis for determining the criteria used to judge the IS's political, military, and economic activities. Readings on modern definitions of a state and explanations for the emergence of modern states over other political entities provide the sources used in the literature review. Additionally, US military doctrine and field manuals provide definitional clarification for modern terms used to discuss the subject matter. The combination of these two sources produce a strong historical and functional framework for characterizing and understanding the IS alongside traditional theories and examples of statehood.

Think tank reporting provides important analysis that is in-depth and describes the IS's activities, as well as the ramifications of its activities in a broader scope. Think tanks such as *The US Council on Foreign Relations*, The Institute for the Study of War, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and companies such as Rand provide considerable analysis and reporting on significant events in the Middle East. Detailed information regarding the IS's military capabilities is largely attained from West Point's Combatting Terrorism Center. These sources provide extensive analysis of events happening on the ground, and the relationship between these events and the criteria used to determine IS's state building capabilities. Reports and analysis produced by the above sources contain considerable detail and justification for conclusions drawn as such publications are designed to better inform policymakers of various events and their potential ramifications.

The IS's statements and materials published and distributed on the Internet provide necessary primary sources that shed insight into what the IS releases to the public, and the means in which it does so. Information on social media, such as Tweets and blog posts, as well as publications such as the English language magazine *Dabiq*, are examples of primary source materials used in this thesis.

Finally, news reports provide the intricate details and facts regarding the IS's activities on the ground. News reports are a vital and necessary source of information because of the IS's recent nature. Information on the IS continues to be released in large volume on a daily basis through news reports; significant quantities of scholastic research on the IS and its activities have yet to be published. Using both western sources, such as *The New York Times*, BBC News, *the Washington Post*, *The Economist* and Middle Eastern sources, such as *Al Jazeera*, provides multiple perspectives on the IS and its actions. Naturally, bias from each individual news source and respective authors must be taken into account when analyzing news sources.

In order to produce an accurate visualization of the IS's organizational and leadership structure, a visual network analysis is included in this thesis. The analysis combines information dispersed throughout numerous sources into a single chart, using the software, Semantica Professional 5.5. Semantica Professional 5.5 is professional-grade software produced by Semantica Research Inc. Primary customers of this software includes the US Department of Defense, the US Intelligence Community, and US Law Enforcement. Additionally, Semantica Professional is currently being marketed to private sector industries combatting insider threat issues, as well as fraud detection. Currently, the Center for Intelligence and Security Studies at the University of

Mississippi holds a license agreement for the software valued at over \$811,000.⁹⁵ At the time of this thesis, the University of Mississippi is the only university in the US that is actively using Semantica Professional 5.5. Incorporating a visual network analysis of the IS provides additional clarity into the IS's organization and structure, as well as the relationships between different individuals and facets incorporated of the organization. Appendix B provides a link of the complete visual analysis, hosted on the University of Mississippi's Center for Intelligence and Security Studies website.⁹⁶ Furthermore, small breakdowns of pertinent aspects of the analysis are embedded in their respective subsections.

⁹⁵ "Center gets software to better train future intelligence agents," *University of Mississippi News*, 23 October 2014, accessed 12 March 2015, http://news.olemiss.edu/center-gets-software-to-better-train-future-intelligence-agents/#.VQH8ioHF8_N.

⁹⁶ <http://ciss-space.com/ISNA>

CHAPTER 3: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

An important tenet of statehood is the presence of a government able to effectively govern its territory and population. Part of this necessarily includes that the population consent, in some form, to being governed. The population's consent is usually more easily achieved if the ruling government is invested in helping improve the population's standard of living. Initially, it may appear as though the IS is not invested in the well being of the populations under its control, given the numerous human rights violations it has committed against populations in its territory.⁹⁷ This is most notable in regard to the IS's treatment of religious minorities, such as Yazidis and Christians, as well as non-Sunni Muslims.⁹⁸ Despite IS's willingness to use violence against its population, IS does, indeed recognize the importance of public opinion to the effectiveness of its governance, and hopes to demonstrate its ability to effectively provide for populations better than existing governments. In the case of Iraq, the Shiite government often did not adequately provide public services and goods to Sunni populations. With regards to Syria, the civil war has caused great disruption to services and governance typically provided by Bashar al-Assad's government. In some of its territories, the IS provides numerous social services, including subsidizing staple

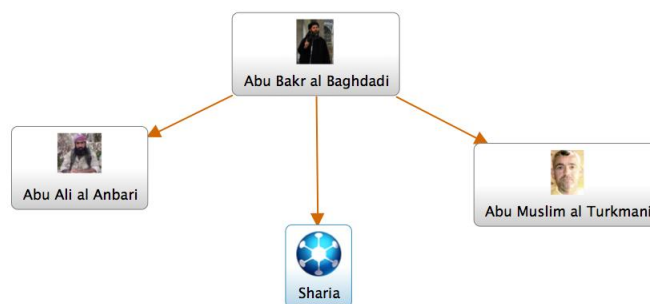
⁹⁷ "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic—Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria," United Nations, 14 November 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/HRC_CRP_ISIS_14Nov2014.pdf.

⁹⁸ Dominic Evans, and Raheem Salman, "ISIS is worse than Ghengis Khan, says top Iraqi Christian leader," *The Huffington Post*, 20 July 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/21/isis-genghis-khan-iraq-chaldean_n_5603939.html.

products, capping rent prices, and creating a free bus system.⁹⁹ Even though these services are not available uniformly across all of the IS’s territory, it does help maintain the IS’s governance. Dually causing populations to become reliant on its governance, and providing superior and more effective governance than “legitimate” state governments, allows the IS to solidify control and gain support from its populations. The longer the IS is able to govern and give wealth back to the populations under its control, the longer it will be supported by its population.

This chapter will demonstrate the complexity of the IS as an organization, through its focus on creating a sophisticated organizational structure that utilizes a chain-of-command system to implement its goals. However, despite the IS’s short-term success in providing services to its population, it is unclear if the IS will be able to maintain its governance in the long-term. Particular focus at the end of this chapter will be paid to the IS’s media output and provincial services, which highlight the functionality of the IS.

3.1 The Executive



4 3

Figure 2: Network Analysis-The Islamic State Executive

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

⁹⁹ Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State,” Brookings Doha Center, No. 13, November 2014, 28.

Ruling the IS Caliphate requires an executive capacity that can dually provide religious and political legitimacy. This ruler must demonstrate that he is a capable leader in both of these respects, in order to maintain power. The current head of the IS provides this leadership, and has cultivated a persona which fulfills this role.

The head of the IS, Ibrahim Awad Ibrahm Ali al Badri al Samarri,¹⁰⁰ who more commonly goes by the nome de guerre Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and his two executive deputies make up the organization's executive tier of leadership. Al-Baghdadi is effectively in control of the organization, representing the ultimate authority and decision maker with uncontested rule. As Caliph, he is at the head of all matters concerning the IS Caliphate, including religious, military, and political issues.

The IS has built a "legitimate" identity for al-Baghdadi, citing in the IS's propaganda his vast religious education as a "professor, teacher, former educator, recognized preacher and a graduate of the Islamic University in Baghdad, where he finished his academic studies (BA, MA and PhD)" and military leadership abilities and experience.¹⁰¹ Thus far, the credibility of this information is questionable at best, as al-Baghdadi has no known military command experience, and his carefully planned public appearances and focus on personal security make it incredibly difficult to "lead from the front," especially in a military capacity. Al-Baghdadi needs to exude personal legitimacy, which likewise determines the IS's legitimacy as a viable and credible organization. This

¹⁰⁰ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 20.

¹⁰¹ Translation of "Moments from the Life Journey of our Master Emir of the Believers": Site Intel Group "A Biography of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," 12 August 2014, accessed 3 January 2015, <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/226-the-story-behind-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi>. Mariam Karouny, "In northeast Syria, Islamic State builds a government," *Reuters*, 4 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/04/us-syria-crisis-raqqa-insight-idUSKBN0GZ0D120140904?irpc=932>.

is shown through the creation of his colorful, though not necessarily factual, background and resume. Furthermore, in proving that he is a credible and deserving leader of the IS, he provides legitimacy for the authority which the executive office of the IS must provide.

However, the power of the IS as an organization does not wholly rely on the presence of an overly charismatic or incredibly skillful leader, but also is reliant on the authority that the executive office of the IS provides. The IS has a strong administrative and organized system of governance which provides strength to the organization. This, in combination with the willingness to control its population using violence, could theoretically allow the IS, as an organization, to outlast the individual leadership of al-Baghdadi. Al-Baghdadi's credibility as presented to the public, nor his leadership abilities are integral to his ability to successfully lead. This is simply because al-Baghdadi, through his position as the IS executive, has enough force to impose his will, regardless of any personal visionary thinking or charisma possessed on his part.¹⁰² Additionally, al-Baghdadi has over four years of experience leading the IS and its predecessor organizations. His surprising appointment as head of the ISI in 2010 was brokered predominately by Samir Abed Hamad al Obeidi al Dulami, a high-ranking member who was formerly a colonel in the Iraqi Revolutionary Guard.¹⁰³ Al Dulami was disliked by many of his fellow ISI members because he failed to adhere to many religious guidelines, but nevertheless, remained an important to the organization due to his administrative

¹⁰² Initial findings in a study of al-Baghdadi's psychological profile indicate that holistically, al-Baghdadi is indeed not an overly charismatic leader: MAJ Jason Spitaletta, USMCR, Joint Staff J7 and the Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory, "Comparative Psychological Profiles: Baghdadadi & Zawahiri," SOCCENT Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL," December 2014. 55.

¹⁰³ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 24.

experience and organizational skills.¹⁰⁴ This demonstrates that the IS, and its precursor organizations, understand the value of practical administrative skills over strict and constant adherence to Sharia doctrine. Al-Baghdadi continues this precedent during his rule, demonstrated in the vast number of former Iraqi Ba'athist officials employed by the IS throughout governmental councils and administrative functions. This relationship is examined further throughout this chapter. Ultimately, the executive office of the IS, headed by al-Baghdadi, provides and maintains the IS's political authority. This demonstrates the presence of Westphalian Sovereignty, in addition to the state action of state-making, as the presence of a strong and effective political authority can help to eliminate internal rivals to the IS's governance.

3.2 Executive Second-Tier Leadership

Al-Baghdadi maintains a second tier of executive leadership through his two executive deputies in command of IS operations in Iraq and Syria (refer to Figure 2). Like many of his other high-level IS administrators, both deputies were formerly members of the Iraqi Ba'ath party.¹⁰⁵ The IS deputy of Iraq, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani was a former high-ranking Iraqi Special Forces soldier with experience in military intelligence, who also worked closely with Saddam Hussein.¹⁰⁶ Abu Ali al-Anbari, the Syrian deputy, was reportedly a physics teacher and member of IS's predecessor organization, Ansar al Islam.¹⁰⁷ These two senior advisors are responsible for all matters that fall under each of their respective territories, and report directly to al-Baghdadi. Al-Turkmani, and al-

¹⁰⁴ Radwan Mortada, "Al-Qaeda leaks: Baghdadi and Golani fight over the Levant empire," *Al Akhbar English*, 10 January 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/print/18186>.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 29.

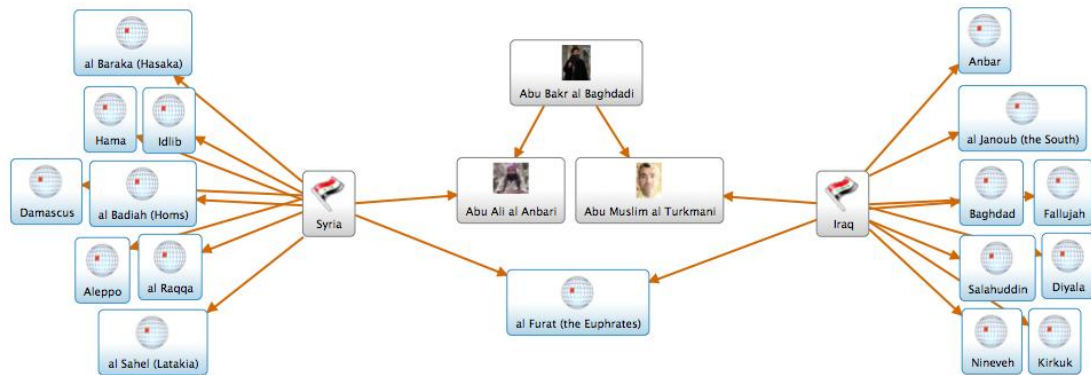
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Anbari are reported to sit on key councils, such as the Shura Council.¹⁰⁸ Although both leaders do not have deep historical ties to jihadist movements, their skills were recognized and utilized by the IS.

The IS's executive tier of leadership provides the ability to realistically implement decisions decreed by an uncontested authority (al-Baghdadi). A strong executive means the IS is not devoting its time or efforts over in fighting regarding the organization's ultimate authority, which allows for resources to be devoted for actually accomplishing the goals of territorial acquisition and governance. One of the executive branch's strengths is the presence of well-educated and experienced subordinates and the hierarchal, chain of command structure responsible for implementing executive decisions. This allows for the IS's time to be used effectively, and gives autonomy to local leaders with the practical knowledge on how to best implement decisions given local conditions. Furthermore, the IS's leadership does not revolve around a charismatic personality, but rather a leader who has consolidated his control and who has placed a number of skilled and experienced leaders at the top of the command structure. This provides the potential for the executive command structure to possibly outlive the executive himself, and thus become a more permanent governing authority. Like the executive, the second-tier executive leadership demonstrates the state action of state making. Furthermore, the second-tier executive provides evidence of domestic sovereignty, since it provides formal organization of political authority.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

3.3 The *Wilayat*



22 22

Figure 3: Network Analysis-The Islamic State's *Wilayat*

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

The IS's organizational structure contains approximately eight to ten national-level councils, which report directly to al-Baghdadi and constitute the overarching authorities regarding the strategic planning, military operations and civilian administration for all of the IS's territory.¹⁰⁹ Many of the councils' functions also present on a smaller district or local level. These smaller departments work jointly with local authorities in specific towns or districts, in addition to implementing directives from their respective national councils. The degree to which councils have been able to exist and effectively implement their directives and achieve their goals consistently throughout all

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the IS's territory is difficult to holistically determine; however, generally the IS appears to be able to implement more governance in large urban centers under its control, such as Raqqa. Overall, the IS appears to employ between 20,000-31,000 fighters and administrators to keep the state functioning.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, due to the diverse backgrounds and experience of those under its employment, IS has a large variety of skill sets in which to draw on for placing individuals in different tasks.¹¹¹ For the practical purposes of governing its territory, the IS divides its territory into 18 provinces, or *Wilayat*, which each have an appointed governor (*Wali*).¹¹² In August 2014, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the estimated territory controlled by the Islamic State varies from 12,000 square miles to 35,000 square miles.¹¹³ This would equate to territory ranging from the size of Belgium to that of Jordan.¹¹⁴ Figure 4 provides a map that attempts to depict the IS's territorial holdings as of August 14, 2014.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Sciutto et al. "ISIS can 'muster' between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters, CIA says." *CNN*. 12 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/index.html>.

¹¹¹ Many senior IS officials were former members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party and have prior experience with administrative tasks. Overlap between some Ba'athist officials and IS members occurred during detainment in US military camps, such as Camp Bucca. See Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," *The Soufan Group*, November 2014, 20.

¹¹² Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," *The Soufan Group*, November 2014, 33. Thompson and Shubert, "The anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings," *CNN*, 2 December 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/>.

¹¹³ Maria Abi-Habib, "Assad policies aided rise of Islamic State militant group," *The Wall Street Journal*. 22 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/assad-policies-aided-rise-of-islamic-state-militant-group-1408739733>.

¹¹⁴ George Packer, "The common enemy," *The New Yorker*, 25 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/25/the-common-enemy>.

¹¹⁵ A description of the map provided by ISW Syria analyst, Jennifer Cafarella for *The Atlantic*, "The attack zones are the most straightforward and are meant to depict those areas in which ISIS has participated in or perpetrated armed clashes or kinetic engagements (such as IEDs). Support zones are areas in which ISIS enjoys freedom of movement and from which such attacks are often staged: they are areas in which ISIS does not necessarily possess defensible control, but in which ISIS forces can nonetheless travel and operate with relatively low risk. Control zones, then, are areas in which we have assessed ISIS to have a larger degree of defensible control ... in which a counter-ISIS force would be faced with serious ISIS resistance." Kathy Gilsinan, "The many ways to map the Islamic 'State,'" *The Atlantic*, 27 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/the-many-ways-to-map-the-islamic-state/379196/>.

The fact that the IS has specifically divided its territory into 18 provinces, and plans to establish a multi-faceted governing structure in each that ultimately answers to a higher central authority demonstrates Westphalian, domestic and interdependence sovereignty. Each of these types of sovereignty requires the presence of a political authority that is able to maintain effective control of its territory and population. Establishing a base for organizing and governing its territory (through its system of Walis) through a theoretical system of governance for each province that dually allows overhead control from a central authority, in addition to providing local autonomy able to more effectively cope with specific conditions and issues in individual areas serves as an indicator that the IS desires a functional state, fully under its authority and control.

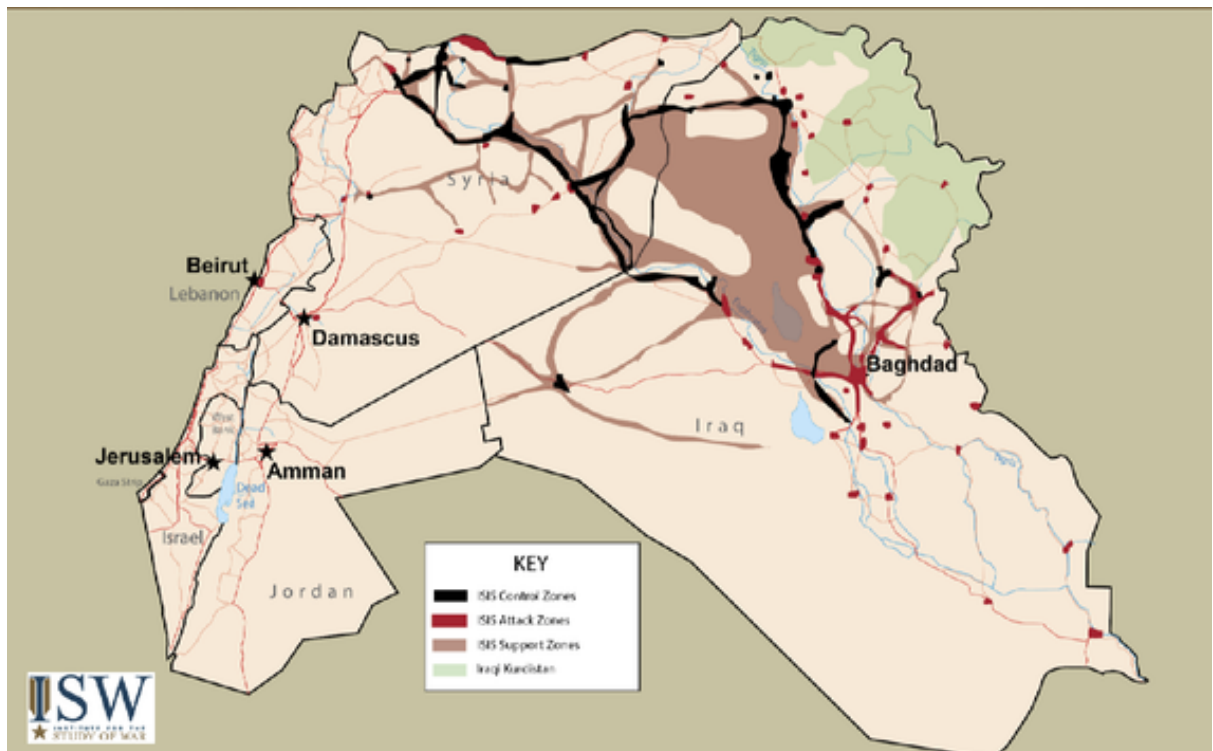


Figure 4: The Islamic State's Sanctuaries, as of 14 August 2014

Source: Lewis, Jessica. "Al Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent." September 2013.
http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AQI-Resurgent-10Sept_0.pdf. Accessed 26 September 2014.

3.4 The Shura Council

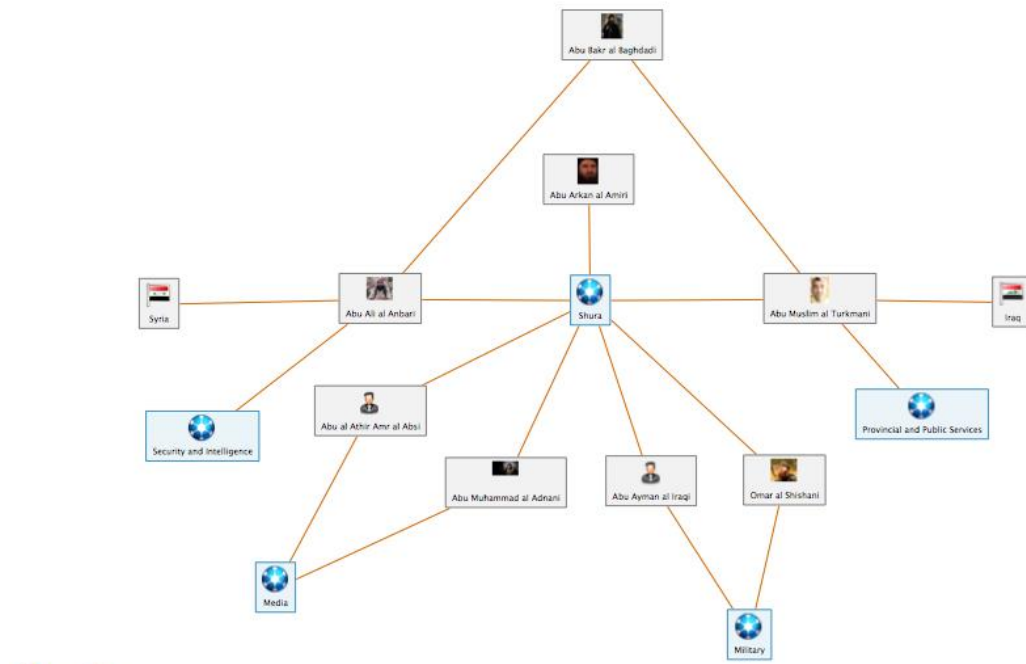


Figure 5: Network Analysis-The Islamic State Shura Council

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

The Shura Council is the highest advisory body for the IS, and represents the IS's legislative capacity. This council consists of 9-11 members, who are reportedly all Iraqi and mostly former Ba'athists, and is responsible for disseminating al-Baghdadi's directives down the chain of command. Furthermore, it often makes rulings on laws and how to implement them. Since IS laws are based on religion, the Shura Council's responsibilities at times overlap with those of the Sharia Council, which coordinates religious matters. Theoretically, the Shura Council also approves al-Baghdadi's various

appointments, and would be responsible for removing al-Baghdadi as Caliph if he failed to carry out his duties.¹¹⁶

The Shura Council represents one of the top tiers of the IS's organizational structure, as it disseminates information directly from the executive to other councils and provinces. This is a strong indicator of interdependence sovereignty, as it helps control the spread of information and ideas to the populations under the control of the IS. Additionally, the Shura Council theoretically strengthens the political structure of the IS, since it strengthens the authority of the executive, because this council has the ability to remove the individual Caliph from his position, and choose the replacement leader. Ultimately, the Shura Council boosts the IS's effective control of its population, as it provides a means in which to more succinctly and easily distribute information and control from the central governing authority throughout its territory.

3.5 The Sharia Council

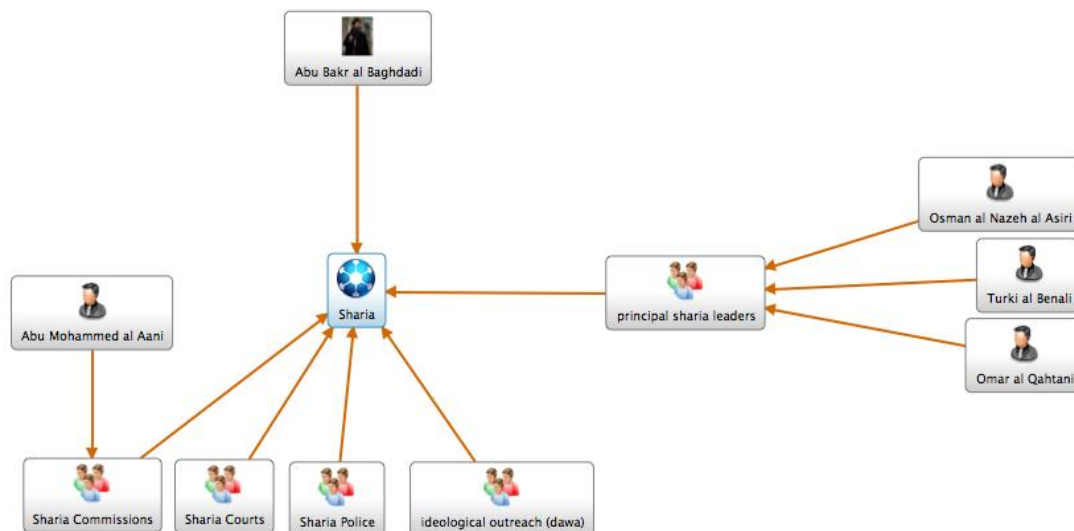


Figure 6: Network Analysis-The Islamic State Sharia Council

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

The IS's judiciary capacity is found in the Sharia Council, which is described as the "the most powerful body of the Islamic State."¹¹⁷ Al-Baghdadi directly heads the Sharia Council, which consists of six additional members. The Sharia Council deals with compliance on religious matters and party discipline, issuing rules and consequential punishments and penalties for infringement. The IS has garnered significant attention in the international media due to the extremely violent nature of its punishments. However, law enforcement based on Sharia Council directives, in the eyes of the IS, demonstrates good governance for its population. For example, beheading highway robbers in Raqqa because they are breaking Islamic law regarding stealing is helping to protect the population and provide lawful order.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the Sharia council controls the IS's religious police force, which is separate from the civilian police force. Religious police, both male and female, supervise Islamic conduct throughout the IS's territory.¹¹⁹ The Sharia Council also controls the religious court system, determining the appropriate punishments issued for various religious crimes. Finally, the council heads the IS's ideological outreach, both inside and outside the IS's territory. The IS seeks religious legitimacy from religious scholars, which is then disseminated through the Sharia Council.¹²⁰ This typically takes the form of guidance on educational standards for the IS, which is solely religious and includes no secular or vocational training.¹²¹

Because the Sharia Council provides a standard set of laws and a consistent set of punishments and consequences for failing to adhere to these laws, it consequently serves

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 30.

¹¹⁸ al-'Ubaydi, et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 70.

¹¹⁹ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 30.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Charles Caris, and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, 17.

as a means in which to maintain authority and effective control over the IS's territory, through an incredibly multi-faceted and formal political authority. Additionally, it regulates the flow of information to the population, as it controls educational standards and curriculum. Once again, the IS demonstrates the presence of Westphalian, domestic and interdependence sovereignty.

3.6 The Media Council

The IS's Media Council, and its various products, are perhaps the organization's most successful ventures, operating essentially unchecked without adequate opposition and therefore commanding (and winning) the information war to promote the IS's legitimacy.¹²² The IS uses its media output to demonstrate that it is a credible and legitimate governing entity as an Islamic Caliphate to both its residents and to the Islamic community. Because media is so closely tied to the organization's legitimacy, the IS places a large emphasis on producing quality products in a timely manner. Writers, bloggers and researchers that are spread throughout many areas and countries, as well as speak multiple languages, staff the media department.¹²³ Specific institutions within the media department, such as the Al-Hayat Media Center, provide services to employees spreading media products. In the case of the Al-Hayat Media Center, this comes in the way of multi-language support and the production of English-language materials geared toward western audiences.¹²⁴ Even though the IS has an official organizational spokesman, this is more of symbolic means to demonstrate the IS's official party rhetoric,

¹²² Rita Katz, "The State Department's Twitter war with ISIS is embarrassing," *Time*, 16 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://time.com/3387065/isis-twitter-war-state-department/>.

¹²³ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 52.
Philip Seib, "Counterterrorism needs to move from State to CIA," *Defense One*, October 27, 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/10/counterterrorism-messaging-needs-move-state-cia/97550/>. Accessed January 10, 2015.

¹²⁴ Barrett, Richard. "The Islamic State." The Soufan Group. November 2014, 55.

as the IS is perfectly capable of spreading its message through alternate means. In addition to disseminating information on a global level, the media department is also located provincially. Provincial media reports local news and events to the population, and distributes information through the circulation of internal hardcopy materials.¹²⁵ Through its various media operations, the IS has successfully developed a monopoly on the control of information spread within its territory, in addition to how it is portrayed in the world.

The IS uses a number of mediums to produce a variety of media and informational products. Best known is its presence on social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and various blogging websites and jihadist forums. Additionally, the IS produces films, such as “The Clanging of the Swords IV,” which it released before its June 2014 offensive.¹²⁶ These visual productions show excellent command of visual effects and graphics, which effectively appeal to younger populations accustomed to modern video and film capabilities and techniques.¹²⁷ The IS has also produced *Dabiq*, an English-language magazine released online, which has been compared considerably to Al Qaeda’s *Inspire* magazine.¹²⁸ This magazine originated in the form of Islamic State News and Islamic State Reports, which discussed military gains and civil administration

¹²⁵ al-‘Ubaydi, et al., “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State,” 49.

¹²⁶ “ISIS jihadists put out Hollywood-style propaganda film,” *France 24*, 13 June 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://observers.france24.com/content/20140613-hollywood-fim-jihadist-propaganda-isis>.

¹²⁷ al-‘Ubaydi, “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State,” 53.

¹²⁸ For a comprehensive list of all *Dabiq* publications, see: The Clarion Project, “The Islamic State’s (ISIS, ISIL) magazine,” 10 December 2014, <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>.

successes, respectively.¹²⁹ However, these two magazines combined to form *Dabiq* in July 2014.¹³⁰ The very quick transition between these two magazines, and the detail of information combined with the information's slick and professional presentation, demonstrates that the IS has had a structured media organization in place for some time.¹³¹

Content of the IS's materials typically revolves around either establishing the legitimacy of the organization through religious reasoning or touting the successes of the IS's governance and military campaigns. Both of these types of messages seek to further the IS's identity as a credible Islamic institution in both the ideological and practical sense. The IS uses a rhetorical strategy in its media that emphasizes the Caliphate is a legitimate and functional entity, both in religious terms, as well in practical success on the ground. Although other extremist militant organizations also use religious ideology to legitimize their actions, the IS is creating and marketing a specific brand image that promotes the organization as a viable state. An example of this can be found by comparing Special Operation Command Central Command's word frequency of the IS's *Dabiq* English-language magazine and Al Qaeda's *Resurgence* English-language magazine. Although there are some similarities between the rhetoric used in the two magazines, there is a striking difference in that *Dabiq* focuses heavily on religion, while *Resurgence* centers on warfare.¹³² Although this specific analysis only focuses on one English-language product, it is apparent that using religious reasoning to justify the

¹²⁹ A PDF of the first Islamic State Report issue can be found here: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-shc481m-22islamic-state-report-122.pdf>.

¹³⁰ al-ʿUbaydi, et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 53.

¹³¹ Ibid.

existence of an Islamic Caliphate is a technique gainfully employed in the IS's media output.

The IS also issues decrees to its followers on how to best serve the organization. This message has changed over time. Concurrently, the IS's decrees to followers have transitioned from "perform[ing] Hijrah-participate in jihad by traveling to Iraq and Syria," "declar[ing] Bay'at-remain in place and create communities of ISIS support" and finally, to "conduct[ing] Lone-Wolf attacks-remain in place and conduct attacks against the enemies of ISIS."¹³³ Essentially, the IS has changed its message for followers to "preform hijrah" by immigrating to IS territory in Iraq and Syria to remaining in their respective countries and attacking governments that do not support the IS. Such decrees demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of the IS's media; the IS must concurrently produce media products that recruit followers, give decrees to supporters, demonstrate that it is a legitimate governing authority and show it can militarily defeat its adversaries.

The IS's media output faces several problems; however, the largest is producing material and disseminating it before the information is removed and users are denied access to sites. By effectively "crowd sourcing" its propaganda, the IS ensures its information is placed in vast quantities in numerous locations. Thus far, the IS is setting the precedent for spreading information in this way. This technique demonstrates that the IS is cognizant that in an age of modern technology, speed is vital to maintaining a monopoly on the spread of information. Since the IS's media wing is constantly adapting how it spreads its information, the IS is able to put out information first. This allows the

¹³² Laura Steckman, Bradley Whitney and Brown, "Branding the Caliphate?: Online Media Framing from a Self-Proclaimed State," SOCCENT Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL, December 2014, 85.

¹³³ Jessica McFate, and Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS's global messaging strategy fact sheet," Institute for the Study of War, December 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/GLOBAL%20ROLLUP%20Update.pdf>.

IS to control the information content being spread, as little to no competing information is being made available. Furthermore, as the IS's users are driven from well-known sites, they turn to unofficial and unusual websites and forums, which makes them increasingly difficult to find and subdue. For example, when the IS's entire Twitter structure was removed in August 2014, it transferred many of its accounts to the Russian social networking website, VKontakte.¹³⁴ Other techniques for spreading information include the development of the "Dawn of Glad Tidings" app, which the IS's supporters can download onto their android phone. The app then posts tweets containing the IS's content to users' accounts.¹³⁵ The IS has also created "Twitter bombs," or tweets designed to incorporate popular trending hashtags to redirect conversation to the IS's specific content.¹³⁶ This was the case during the 2014 World Cup, when the IS used the hashtag "#WorldCup" (refer to Figure 7).

In reference to a beheaded Sunni police officer, one tweet read, "This is our ball. It's made of skin #WorldCup" with an attached picture of said decapitated head.¹³⁷ The IS is an organization that is very in touch with how younger audience are using and receiving information (through social media websites, online forums, etc.). More importantly, the IS is technologically savvy, able to use these new media forms to its advantage. This allows the IS to retain a monopoly on creating and dispersing information within its territorial holdings, in addition to sharing information to the

¹³⁴ Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchieri, "Russia's 'Facebook cracking down on ISIS accounts,'" Mashable, 12 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://mashable.com/2014/09/12/isis-islamic-state-vkontakte-russia/>.

¹³⁵ J.M Berger, "How ISIS Games Twitter," *The Atlantic*, 16 June 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/>.

¹³⁶ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 55.

¹³⁷ David Lerman, "Beheading #WorldCup shows Islamic State's online savvy," *Bloomberg*, 7 July 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-07/beheading-worldcup-shows-islamic-state-s-online-savvy.html>.

outside world about its purpose and activities. Therefore, the IS is able to better maintain its authority as a governing entity, as it holds the means in which to distribute information to the populations under its control.

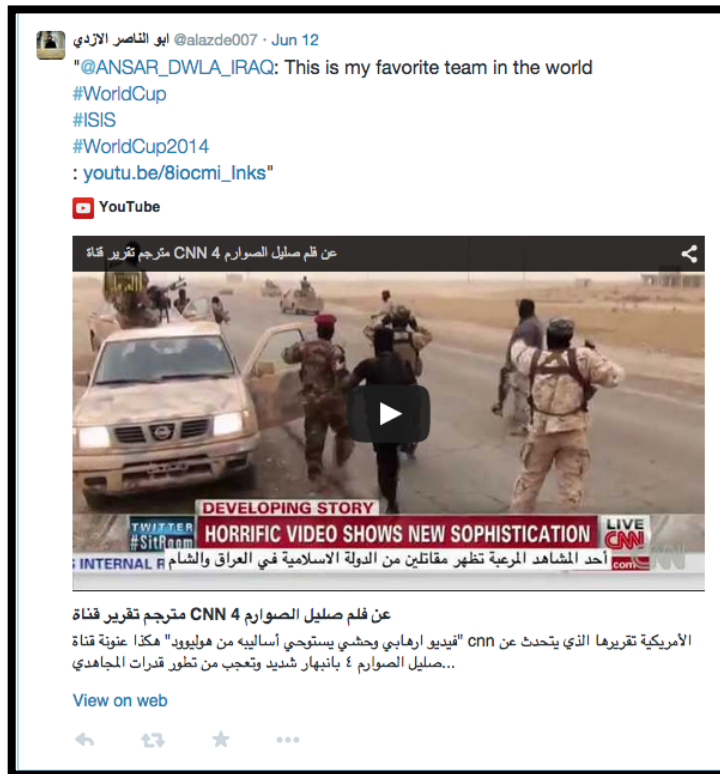


Figure 7: Tweet Demonstrating the IS's use of #WorldCup

Source: Twitter. 12 June 2014.

The IS's media wing is a fairly disciplined entity, yet it does occasionally face difficulties with false information being spread over the Internet. In response to this false information, the IS seems to have implemented a credibility check capability, although it is still unclear to what extent this is being used, or how many individuals operating in this capacity exist.¹³⁸ Essentially, users go behind those who have posted false information and cite that it goes against what is officially been decreed by the IS.¹³⁹ This demonstrates that the IS cares about its credibility as well as the information distributed

¹³⁸ al-'Ubaydi, et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 53.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

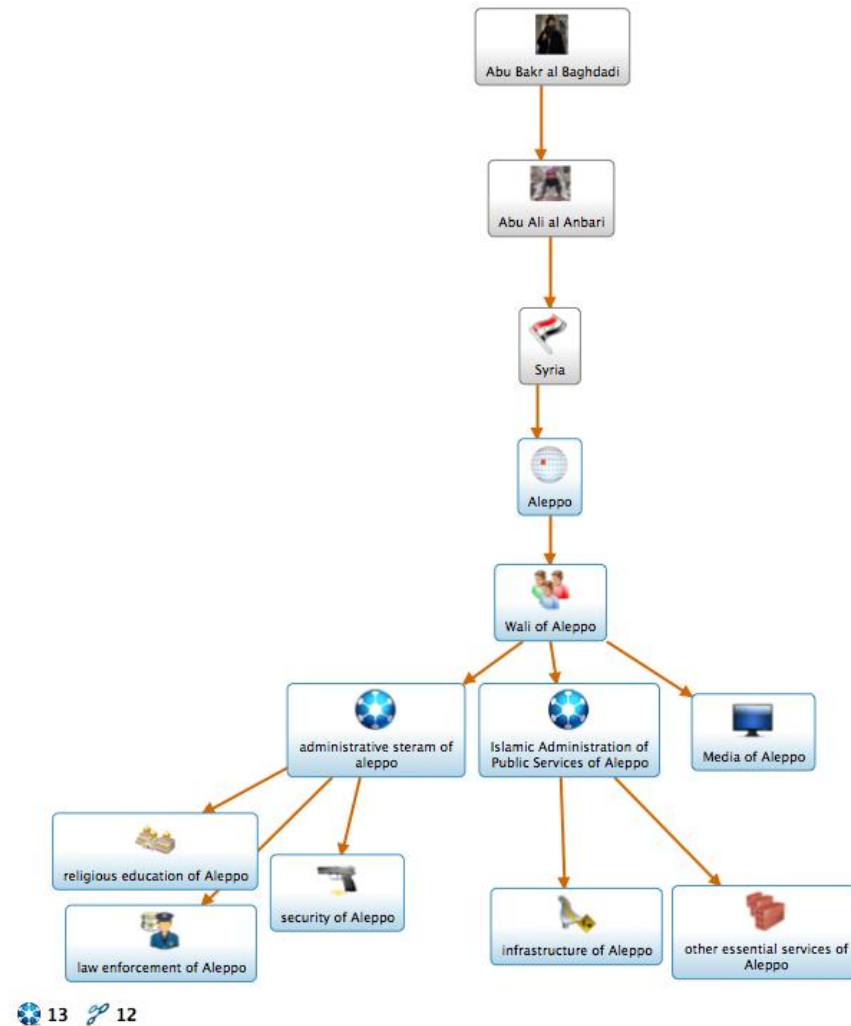
itself and its activities. Users that claim to be the IS, and spread “official” IS information threaten the IS’s monopoly on information. Finally, like any entity with military capabilities, the IS faces problems maintaining operational security, that is, keeping its goals, capabilities and objectives (usually in a military sense) a secret until they are actually accomplished. The IS has encouraged its members to only post about past victories, and not future ones.¹⁴⁰ However, the potential for prematurely released information of strategic value always remains a concern. The IS recognizes the need to protect its military objectives from public knowledge. This is a problem that is also faced by the conventional militaries of recognized states. The IS walks a fine line between strategically using media to spread fear when approaching targets, and maintaining secrecy so the spread of information does not compromise its military actions.

The importance of the Media Council lies in the means in which the IS is able to portray itself to the populations it controls and the world. It must spread messages that argue first and foremost it is a legitimate Caliphate, essentially a state in an Islamic discourse. The IS needs to portray it is a relevant and viable government, demonstrated through its proficiency at using traditional print, and new online mediums to spread its messages. Also, the IS is very involved in the content of its media output, so much so that it is attempting to stop “unofficial” IS sources. The IS has proved itself to be very successful and adept at establishing a monopoly on the control of information in its territory, as well as its image in the world. Since the IS is able to effectively project an image of itself that demonstrates effective political, military and economic control, it can appear as a practically functioning *de facto* state. Demonstrating that it is able to execute state-like governing functions in parts of its territory, likewise shows the IS’s strengths,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 50.

compared to the weaknesses and shortcomings of governance from existing sovereign states of Syria and Iraq.

3.7 The Provincial Council and Public Services



13 12

Figure 8: Network Analysis-The Islamic State Provincial Council and Public Services in Aleppo, Syria

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

The IS's Provincial Council oversees the civilian administration of the organization's 18 provinces.¹⁴¹ Each of the 18 provinces has a regional governor, who presides over a local structure that mirrors the IS's central structure. For example, each province has a Sharia commander, a military commander and a security commander.¹⁴² There are some indications that the IS is allowing locals, and not individuals appointed by the IS, to become provincial governors in territory where the IS has a weaker presence.¹⁴³ This demonstrates that the IS does not have equal political (or military) control throughout all its territory. Additionally, the IS on some occasions moves its governors around to new territories.¹⁴⁴ This ensures individuals with ruling experience are in power, but not allowed to remain in power long enough to build an extensive provincial or regional base of support that could rival the authority of the IS.

On the provincial level, governance can be divided into two categories: administration and services. The administration sector entails a mirror of the realms the national councils dictate, such as religious education, security law enforcement, media and tribal affairs. Provincial services fall under the control of the "Islamic Administration of Public Services," or the General Services Committee. This administration oversees the building and maintenance of infrastructure, electricity, sanitation, water, agricultural systems, cleaning and repairing roads, and other essential services, such as bread production.¹⁴⁵ By controlling all services in its provinces in a monopolistic fashion, the IS

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Siobhan Gorman, Nour Malas, and Matt Bradley, "Brutal Efficiency: The Secret to Islamic State's Success," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 September 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-secret-to-the-success-of-islamic-state-1409709762>.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Caris, and Samuel Reynolds, "ISIS Governance in Syria," Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 42.

is able to further assert its control over the populations in the territory it controls. Without access to basic needs and services, the population would be more likely to rise up against the IS's rule. The longer the IS is able to govern and give wealth back to the populations under its control, the longer it will be supported by its population.

Despite maintaining control over different sectors on a provincial level, IS governance on the provincial level has experienced many gaps in providing services, as well as poor long-term decisions in how to distribute and manage services. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this is the IS's control of Lake Assad, a reservoir in the al-Raqqa province. In addition to being an important source of electricity for residents of the province, the dam also provides a significant source of fresh drinking water for the local population.¹⁴⁶ Under the Syrian government's administration, the power plant adjoining the lake only operated two of its eight electrical turbines part-time. When the IS gained control, however, it began operating all eight turbines at full-time in an effort to provide electricity to larger numbers of people.¹⁴⁷ A drought in the region, combined with the running of all turbines resulted in the quick depletion of water from the lake.¹⁴⁸ In the long term, choices such as this will result in less people receiving electricity and water (as the lake's water supply is completely depleted), rather than more, as the IS administration intended. The management and mismanagement of services and resources on a provincial level will prove very significant in determining the IS's ability to effectively govern its territory, especially in the long-term. Even though the IS may currently maintain effective

¹⁴⁶ "Syria: The struggle for Electricity," Economist Intelligence Unit, 3 October 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1342349918&Country=Syria&topic=Economy_1.

¹⁴⁷ Danya Chudacoff, "Water war' threatens Syria lifeline," Al-Jazeera, 7 July 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/water-war-syria-euphrates-2014757640320663.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

control over its population, and exist as an organized and authoritative political structure, the decisions it is making regarding how to provide key state- like functions (such as the management providing services to its populations) serve as strong indicators as to the feasibility of the IS's governance and future failures in the long-term. Since the IS's main goal is to create a functional state, failure to actually function in the eyes of the greater population would prove highly detrimental to the IS's overarching goals and legitimacy as a governing authority.

In addition to poor planning in the use of key resources, the IS's ability to maintain governance over the long-term is called into question due to their educational policies. Proficiency in numerous technical tasks is required in order to maintain many services and adequately utilize resources, such as the production of electricity and oil. The IS's current educational policies focus strictly on religious subject matter, and provide no vocational training or professional education. Without the creation of a new professional class to run the technical, yet vital, aspects of the IS, the IS's long-term survival is called into question. The IS's poor long-term planning and lack of authority throughout all of its territory demonstrates that the IS does not possess complete authority, and would thus demonstrate a lack of *de facto* sovereignty. However, it also demonstrates the shortcomings of attempting to apply, in practice, the definition of *de facto* sovereignty as it is unclear to the degree of control an entity must possess in order to be considered *de facto*. For this reason, the HSE definition of statehood becomes increasingly applicable. Applying the Class II HSE definition takes into account that the IS does possess some degree of *de facto* control, but not throughout all of its territory.

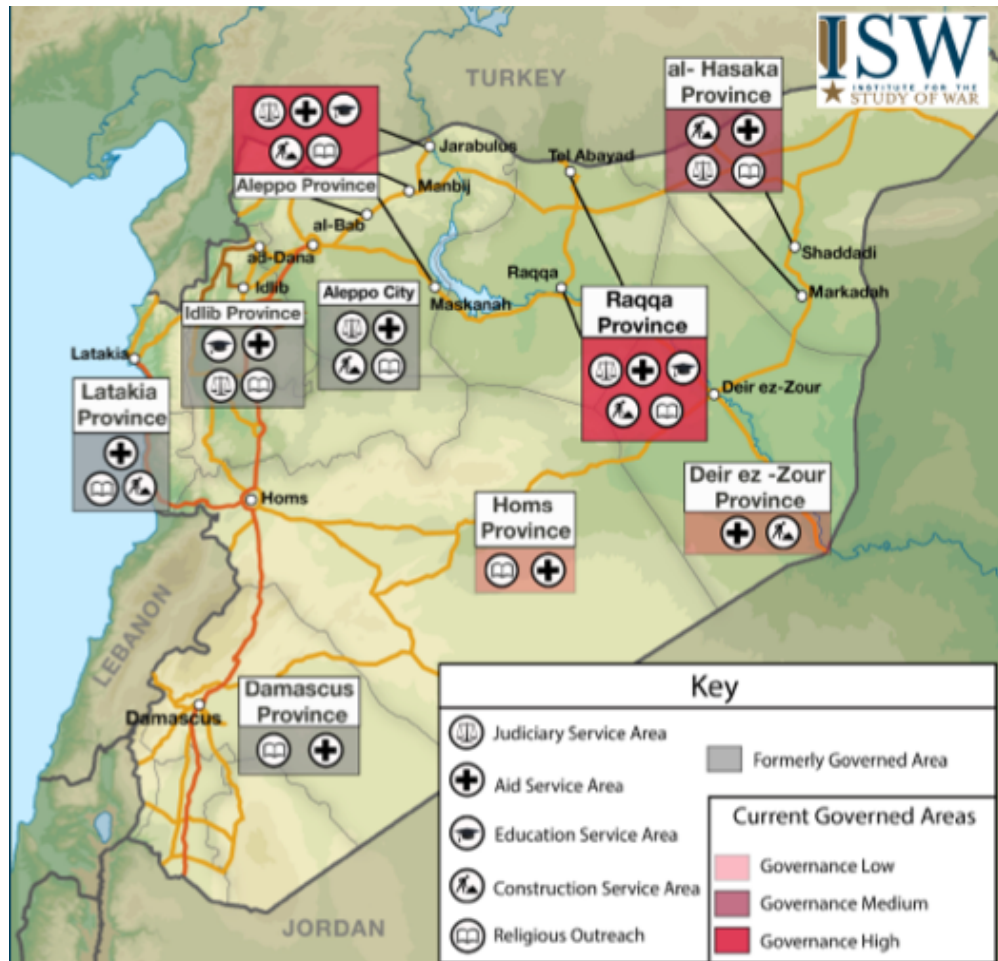


Figure 9: Areas of Governance, as of July 2014

Source: Caris, Charles and Reynolds, Samuel. "Middle East Security Report 22: ISIS governance in Syria." July 2014.

http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf. Accessed 26 September 2014.

3.8 Conclusion

The IS has developed numerous councils that are responsible for many facets of governance on a national, regional and local level. Cognizant of the resources and necessary facets to effectively govern, the IS has focused on creating an organization possessing executive, judicial, legislative and social services functions. These councils

and their respective bureaus are complex and have been successful in many respects, notably in media campaigns and implementing Islamic Sharia law in the IS's territory. The IS desires effective governance over its territory and is making considerable attempts to achieve this. However, problems are manifest in IS's ability to consistently govern all the territory it holds, as well as continuing to provide basic services to the people in its territory in the long term.

The IS is able to exist and even entertain the idea of appealing to its population predominately due to regional instability and a lack of effective governance on behalf of the Syrian and Iraqi governments. Even though most populations allow the IS uncontested governance out of fear, the fact remains that in many circumstances, especially for Sunnis in Iraq, life under the IS is of higher quality than life prior to the IS's governance.¹⁴⁹ Some residents may view a "stick and carrot" approach, that is the "stick of strict Sharia law" and "carrot" of social services as preferable to the perceived "repressive, sectarian and foreign-influenced governments and incapable "moderate" oppositions" exhibited by the "legitimate" government in Iraq and rebel opposition groups in Syria.¹⁵⁰ However, there are several accounts that indicate that residents in IS's territory are not fully contented with the IS's governance. For example, in Raqqa crowds have refused to take part in public stonings.¹⁵¹ Also in Raqqa, a local schoolteacher released an Internet video in 2013 titled *The Woman In Pants* that "lambasted ISIS for [its] draconian rule and religious obscurantism."¹⁵² Despite the presence of some

¹⁴⁹ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," Brookings Doha Center, No. 13, November 2014, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 29.

¹⁵¹ Sophia Jones, "Video appears to show Islamic State militants stoning a woman to death," *The Huffington Post*, 21 October 2014, accessed 13 March 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/21/islamic-state-stoning_n_6019950.html.

¹⁵² Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, (New York: Regan Arts, 2015) 187.

opposition, the IS maintains the advantage in that the governments in Iraq and Syria are largely unable to protect their populations from the IS's harsh governance.

The IS recognizes the importance of effectively governing the territory it gains, as well as the public opinion of the majority of the people living in that territory. From the IS's perspective, its violent actions are fair, justified and represent good governance. An organized and detailed administrative structure is in place which allows for multiple governmental functions, including legislative and judicial branches to exist and actually implement the directives issued to them by the IS executive. Furthermore, the IS provides services to the majority of the populations under its rule, in most instances, arguably better than their former existing "legitimate" governments. It attempts to govern throughout a large territory on a local, regional and national level, utilizing a new administrative capacity that was not fully present in its precursor organizations of AQI. The various councils and their respective functions demonstrate the presence of Westphalian, domestic and interdependence sovereignty, in addition to state making, as the IS seeks to eliminate internal rivals to its governance. This further indicates the presence of internal sovereignty, which contributes strongly to the hypothesis that the IS is functionally a *de facto* state. However, it is unclear the degree to which the IS's governance and effective control is present throughout all of its territory. Additionally, the theoretical definition to how much 'effective control' a political authority must control throughout its territory in order to be considered a *de facto* state does not provide specific criteria, therefore making it difficult to judge the exact degree of effective control the IS maintains. Finally, the ability of the IS to continue to maintain effective control of its territory and populations in the future is questionable, at best. These reasons, in

addition to the lack of clarity regarding the degree to which the IS is interacting with outside entities make it difficult to declare, with certainty, that the IS is a *de facto* state. However, when applying the definitions of the classes of HSE to the situation, the IS in the actions throughout its territory, would fall into a Class II HSE. The IS exhibits some characteristics of a *de facto* state, as it has control of majority of its territory and population and is generally effective in subduing internal political opposition. However, as evidenced throughout this chapter, the IS faces some difficulties in maintaining effective governance throughout all of its territory, presently and in the long term.

CHAPTER 4: MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

The IS's military capabilities, specifically the "conventional" nature of many of the IS's military campaigns, have garnered much attention by the media. The IS's military wing is under direct control of al-Baghdadi, through the Military Council. Furthermore, the IS's military apparatus is distinctly separate from internal policing activities, and has its own specific goals that focus on the acquisition of new territory and the defense of the acquired territory. In addition to conventional tactics, the IS's military uses traditional insurgency tactics that incorporate guerilla style fighting. This combination of conventional and insurgency tactics, according to the *Small Wars Journal*, warrants terming the IS as a 'hybrid' threat, that is, an entity that combines multiple fighting-style tactics to achieve its aspirations.¹⁵³

4.1 Leadership

The Military Council heads the IS's military affairs and dictates the IS's overarching campaign to win more territory, while defending the territory it already holds.¹⁵⁴ Most of the leaders on this council have military experience, either in Iraq, or as foreign fighters elsewhere. This council provides the directives for the movement of foreign fighters, military supplies, logistics, compensating the families of dead fighters

¹⁵³ Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland, "The Islamic State is a hybrid threat." *Small War Journal*, 1 December 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-islamic-state-is-a-hybrid-threat-why-does-that-matter>.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014, 31.

and the deployment of explosives.¹⁵⁵

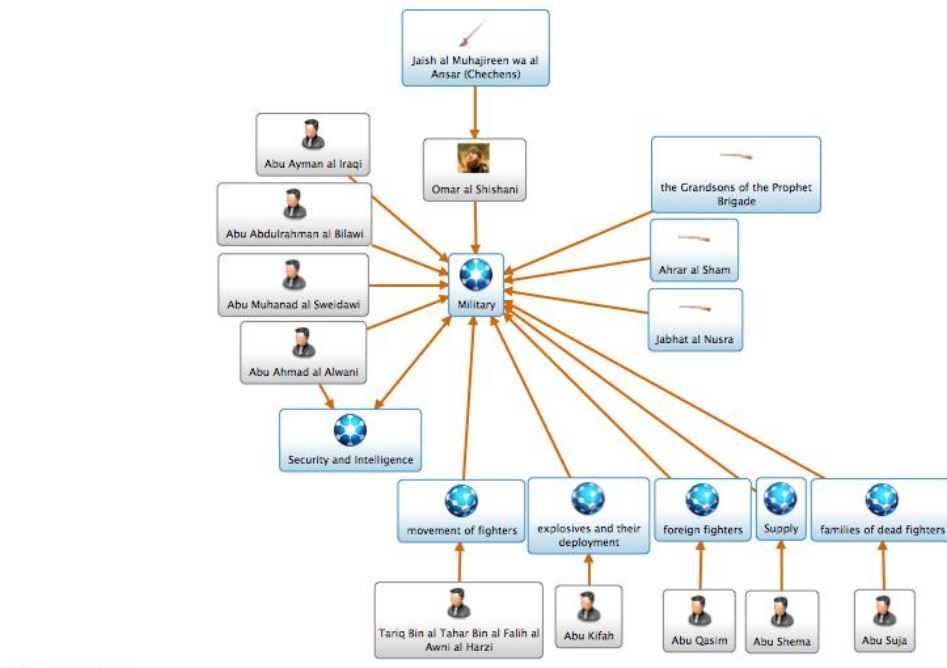


Figure 10: Network Analysis- The Islamic State's Military Leadership

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne.2015.

The IS's military capability was largely built by Haji Bakr, a senior IS official appointed by al-Baghdadi. Bakr allegedly purged the IS and its precursor organizations of non-Iraqi senior leadership, replacing these leaders with former Iraqi Ba'athist officials. Many of these new leaders served as commanders in the Iraqi military,¹⁵⁶ and therefore, brought both professionalism and conventional military experience to the organization. Most of the IS's military leaders have experience in fighting in both traditional military campaigns, as well as in insurgency and guerilla warfare. For example one of the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Mitchell Prothero, "How 2 shadowy ISIS commanders designed their Iraq campaign," McClatchy, 30 June 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/06/30/231952/how-2-shadowy-isis-commanders.html>.

members of the IS's military council is Abu Muhanad al Sweidawi, who was a former Lieutenant Colonel in Saddam Hussein's air defense intelligence organization.¹⁵⁷

Conversely, the head of the military council, Omar al Shishani, is a former Georgian army sergeant from Chechnya, who has experience leading a well trained group of Chechen fighters in Syria since 2013.¹⁵⁸ Generally, most military leaders have prior battlefield experience that adds a level of professionalism to the higher ranks.¹⁵⁹ Their knowledge not only extends to military tactics, but also the logistical aspects of waging war as a conventional military force.

The experience possessed by the IS's military leadership, as well as the fact that the military structure must report to the IS's overall political structure, through the Military Council, greatly strengthens the IS's political structure. The IS's political authority is not in competition with the military apparatus, but rather commands it. Additionally, the diverse expertise of the military leadership in both conventional and irregular military tactics allows for a greater chance of military success. The IS's military success allows the IS as a whole to maintain its borders, as well as gain new territory. Furthermore, military success that is ultimately brokered from an overarching political authority strengthens the authority of this political authority, as well as the effective control the government has over the population.

Many foreign fighters make up the ranks of the IS's military. Around 15,000 foreign fighters are employed by the IS.¹⁶⁰ These fighters generally have military

¹⁵⁷ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 32.

¹⁵⁸ Alan Cullison, "Meet the Rebel Commander in Syria that Assad, Russia and The U.S. all fear," *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 November 2013, accessed 10 January 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303309504579181962177007316>.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 21.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 16.

experience in insurgency-style fighting, and hail from numerous countries; however, almost half of the IS's foreign fighters are from just five countries.¹⁶¹ The degree to which the IS relies on foreign fighters to fill its military ranks demonstrates that, contrary to what it may portray to the populations under its control, the IS is not an organization with predominately Iraqi or Syrian members.¹⁶² It is unlikely foreign fighters are receiving adequate monetary compensation for their military service to the IS. Given a lack of compensation, the question arises if foreign fighters will continue to fight for the IS in the long term. Since many fighters are not indigenous to Iraq or Syria, they predominantly seem to be fighting for personal gain. Once a new conflict emerges that offers additional opportunities for foreign fighters, will these fighters remain with the IS? Adequately integrating foreign fighters into Syrian and Iraqi society in order to retain their skills will pose difficulties for the IS, as will recruiting more indigenous populations into the IS's military.

The degree to which the IS relies on foreign fighters to conduct and execute its objectives across its territory has implications on the status of its *de facto* sovereignty. If the IS currently relies heavily on the foreign fighters, but later the foreign fighters choose to leave the IS's employment, this could pose negative ramifications on the IS's ability to effectively govern its territory. At the same time, it is unlikely all foreign fighters would leave at the same, leaving some of the IS's territory with more control than other areas. Once again, this calls into question the effectiveness of the definition of *de facto* sovereignty. Class II HSE, and in the future, a possible degradation to Class III HSE

¹⁶¹ Bill Roggio, "German, Saudi, and Turkish Islamic State Fighters launch complex suicide attack," *Long War Journal*, 12 October 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/10/german_saudi_and_turkish_islam.php/.

Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 16.

¹⁶² Ibid.

more appropriately demonstrates the nature of the IS's ability to govern and maintain effective control over its territorial holdings.

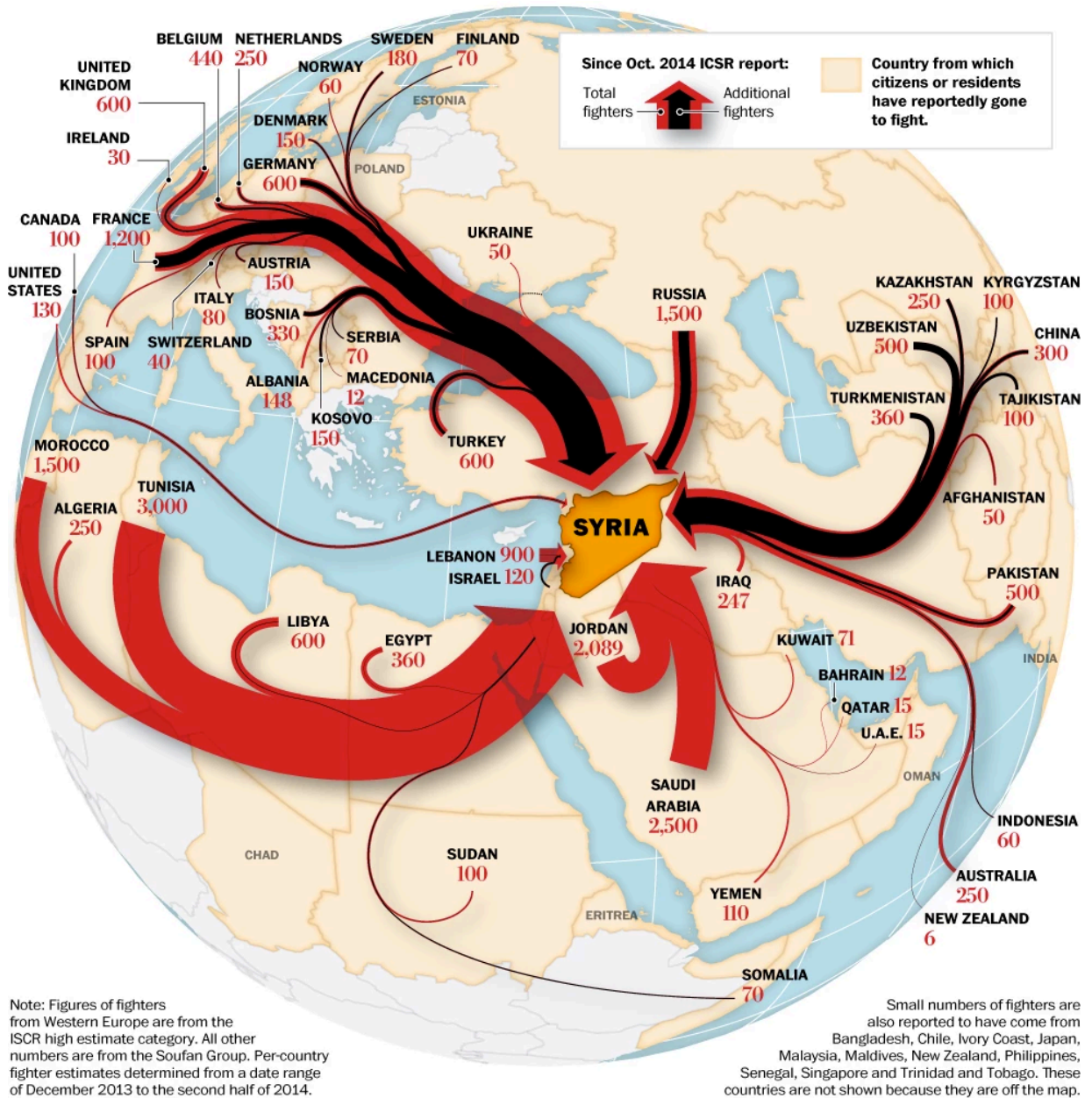


Figure 11: Flow of Foreign Fighters to Syria

Source: Thorp, Gene and Sharma, Swati. "Foreign fighters flow into Syria." The Washington Post. 27 January 2015. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2015/01/27/7fa56b70-a631-11e4-a7c2-03d37af98440_graphic.html. Accessed 14 March 2015.

4.2 Recruitment

Overall, the IS appears remarkably similar to western conventional militaries in its development of recruitment and training programs, as well as developing a system of “active duty” service and rest and relaxation time. A large aspect of maintaining a military force requires both recruiting new troops, as well as training recruits and current troops alike. The IS does appear to have a long-term plan for professionalizing its troops through training.¹⁶³ Many training camps exist throughout the IS’s territory, and this number has increased since 2013.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, active recruitment of new troops is occurring both inside and outside the IS’s territory. Inside the IS’s territory, numerous recruitment centers have been established in population centers. The IS readily broadcasts the locations of these centers.¹⁶⁵ Detailing the recruitment and training process for all fighters is difficult. However, the Brookings Doha Center explains the process through several interviews it conducted with fighters. After securing transportation from an existing IS member and arriving to Syria or Iraq, the recruit is brought to a pre-arranged location with other recruits. The recruits’ personal information is logged and financial donations are accepted. Recruit training begins with several weeks of religious indoctrination and learning basic military skills. These military skills include the use of pistols, RPGs and occasionally mortars. Sometimes additional training is given for more complicated weapons. Following their completion of training, the recruits are assigned guard duty for several weeks before being sent to frontline military operations.¹⁶⁶ The

¹⁶³ Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State,” 17.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Charles Caris, and Samuel Reynolds, “Middle East Security Report 22: ISIS governance in Syria,” Institute for the Study of War, July 2014, accessed 26 September 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State,” 17.

presence of a recruitment and training program for fighters, even if it only exists on a limited basis, indicates that the IS has an established system, the means and the desire to continue its military operations on a long-term basis. The recruit training process also requires logistical considerations (recruit information is logged, passports are copied, recruits are assigned guard duty then transferred to new duty locations), which the IS is willing to provide. Furthermore, there is evidence that military units rotate from “active” duty fighting in the frontlines to days off in “liberated” regions, as well as units’ deployments to numerous “bases.”¹⁶⁷ Such actions demonstrate the presence of professional commanders of troops that are not only conventional in their tactical fighting abilities, but also in their cognizance of maintaining troop morale and the logistical considerations necessary to move large numbers of people and military supplies from garrison to the battlefield and vice versa.

The IS’s development of recruitment and training programs, as well as cognizance of the need for soldiers to recuperate after fighting demonstrates that, to a certain degree, the IS understands the importance of Schofield’s Definition of Discipline, which is commonly used to teach principles of military leadership, “the discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than make an army.”¹⁶⁸ By creating a military structure that develops the skills of soldiers, recognizes the importance of placing different skill sets in different fighting capabilities, and rewarding soldiers for front line duty, the IS creates and retains soldiers that are appreciated and therefore, more willing to continue to fight. The brutality and viciousness

¹⁶⁷Ibid, 17.

¹⁶⁸ Major General John M. Schofield, “Address to the Corps of Cadets, US Military Academy,” 11 August 1879.

that is often characteristic of the IS's soldiers would not be possible without adequate treatment of the soldiers themselves. Like most conventional modern militaries today, the IS's military is highly organized, and aware of the impact of high troop morale on the battlefield. Ultimately, this organization and understanding of how to run a conventional military translates to the IS's ability to wage war, and thus eliminate rivals outside its territory. Eliminating rivals thus allows the IS, as a political entity, to maintain its authority. This is a strong indicator of the presence of *de facto* sovereignty. However, it is again difficult to discern the degree to which these conventional tactics are being applied, and therefore, if the IS can be solidly defined as fully possessing *de facto* sovereignty.

4.3 Tactics

The overarching military strategy for the IS uses blended tactics that are applied to a wide variety of situations to achieve the overarching strategic goal of acquiring territory. From a military point of view, the IS has proven capable fighting as both a light infantry force backed by heavy weapons, and as a Maoist style guerilla force.¹⁶⁹ Possessing both conventional military capabilities as a light infantry force as well as irregular-guerilla style tactics makes the IS a unique military force. Guerilla insurgency-type operations can prove incredibly successful against larger conventional forces; however, possessing conventional fighting capabilities gives the IS a sense of legitimacy in the military sense. Given the style of attacks conducted by the IS, it does not appear that the organization is making any serious attempts in the short term to acquire territory outside of Syria and Iraq. Even though the IS has declared it has global aspirations to create its Caliphate, so far it would be difficult to practically accomplish this from a military perspective. Establishing and maintaining effective control over territory as a

¹⁶⁹ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 30.

functional political authority is paramount for the IS to achieve its goal of establishing a Caliphate. Practically, the IS can only continue to exert this control over a given territory, until it develops the functional ability to govern additional territory. Furthermore, the degree of military control the IS exerts throughout its territory is difficult to analyze, and therefore, so is determining if the IS possesses *de facto* sovereignty. Class II HSE would be a better characterization of the IS, because it takes into account that the IS may only exert control over part of its territory, rather than all or no territory exclusively.

4.4 Objectives

The presence of a chain of command authority structure allows military leaders on the ground to have some autonomy regarding how to accomplish their objectives.¹⁷⁰ This is advantageous because regional commanders are more familiar with the details of their objectives than national-level leaders. Additionally, this allows battles to be fought on multiple fronts at the same time. Strategically, the IS's goals for acquiring territory in Iraq and Syria vary slightly, yet both ultimately revolve around gaining and maintaining territory. The IS's objectives for Syria include controlling the Euphrates River, seizing critical oil infrastructure, establishing freedom of maneuver through the Kurdish areas of Syria, expelling the remaining regime forces from their bases in Eastern Syria and seizing critical supply lines along the Turkish border.¹⁷¹ It is important to note that the IS's strategy in both Syria and Iraq includes gaining access to important resources, such as oil, water and grain, in addition to military targets.¹⁷² In order to provide services to its

¹⁷⁰ Michael Knights, "ISIL's political-military aspirations in Iraq," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 7, Issue 8. 27 August 2014.

¹⁷¹ Jessica McFate, and Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS's global messaging strategy fact sheet," Institute for the Study of War, December 2014, 10 January 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/GLOBAL%20ROLLUP%20Update.pdf>.

¹⁷² As of September 2014 Reuters reported that the IS controlled almost 40% of Iraq's grain producing regions: Maggie Fick, "Special report: Islamic State uses grain to tighten grip in Iraq," *Reuters*, 30

population, the IS requires key resources. The only way to attain these resources is through military acquisition, and logically it makes sense to seize key natural resources near populations that are under the IS's control. The IS's objectives in Iraq focus more on targeting Sunni urban centers and gaining control of transportation routes in Sunni regions.¹⁷³ Sunni urban centers provide the IS with the opportunity to provoke sectarian tensions. Additionally, the IS seeks to acquire transportation routes which are a necessity for controlling the movement of goods and people throughout the IS's territory.¹⁷⁴

4.5 Urban Tactics

Generally, when attacking urban areas, the IS uses a specific set of tactics. First, the military prepares the urban area by "setting the conditions for uncontested rule."¹⁷⁵ This includes undermining the local government and frightening the local population through assassinations, detonating IEDs and VBIEDS, and broadcasting past military successes through propaganda.¹⁷⁶ These tactics were implemented in Syria's Dier Neivez-zor province from April-July 2014.¹⁷⁷ This has proved a fairly successful tactic, as numerically superior Iraqi forces fled the IS's June 2014 advance on Mosul.¹⁷⁸ Following the preparatory measures, the IS's forces conduct military attacks. These either

September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/30/us-mideast-crisis-wheat-idUSKCN0HP12J20140930?irpc=932>.

¹⁷³ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 18.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Caris, "How does ISIS maintain control of large urban areas?," Institute for Understanding War, 9 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Charlie_Briefing_ISIS.pdf.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

Scott Jasper, and Scott Moreland, "The Islamic State is a hybrid threat," *Small War Journal*, 1 December, 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-islamic-state-is-a-hybrid-threat-why-does-that-matter>.

¹⁷⁷ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 19.

¹⁷⁸ Liz Sly, and Ahmed Ramadan, "Insurgents seize Iraqi city of Mosul as security forces flee," *The Washington Post*, 10 June 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgents-seize-iraqi-city-of-mosul-as-troops-flee/2014/06/10/21061e87-8fcd-4ed3-bc94-0e309af0a674_story.html. 33.

manifest themselves as mass casualty urban attacks or as attrition against military opponents' capabilities and morale.¹⁷⁹ Mass casualty attacks often target minority groups and further the IS's goal of increasing sectarian tensions, as was the case during the IS's summer 2014 attacks against the Iraqi town of Amerli, which has a mostly Shia Turkmen population.¹⁸⁰ Effecting the opponent's capabilities is achieved by overwhelming the opponent's capability to defend. The IS's willingness to use extreme brutality in its fighting tactics negatively affects its opponents' morale. Following a successful military attack, the IS's synchronized military and political personnel move into the urban area and begin establishing governance.¹⁸¹ This holistic system ensures a governing authority is in place, with a military force capable of establishing compliance with the governing authority's directives. The IS then coerces the local population to maintain their jobs, while foreign fighters become managers. Governance is then solidified through providing services to the population and building infrastructure, as well as maintaining a sophisticated record-keeping system.¹⁸² This complex and multi-faceted strategy indicates that considerable planning goes into conducting military campaigns, as well as synchronization between military and political units. The IS's military has specified goals, as well as a proven system for accomplishing these goals. Without military leadership that has experience in conducting conventional military campaigns, as well as insurgency-type operations, the IS's tactics would undoubtedly prove unsuccessful. The

¹⁷⁹ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 19.

¹⁸⁰ Abigail Hauslohner and Erin Cunningham, "As battle lines shift in Iraq, Sunnis who welcomed the Islamic State fear retribution," *The Washington Post*, 1 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/as-battle-lines-shift-in-iraq-sunnis-who-welcomed-the-islamic-state-fear-retribution/2014/09/01/3f3ca9f1-5109-4cc9-9bfc-e548fec41f2_story.html.

¹⁸¹ Charles Caris, "How does ISIS maintain control of large urban areas?," Institute for Understanding War, 9 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Charlie_Briefing_ISIS.pdf.

¹⁸² Ibid.

presence of these characteristics demonstrates that the IS has command over its military capabilities and is therefore more likely to exert effective military, and therefore political, control over its territory.

4.6 Adversaries

An important aspect of the IS's military success, particularly in its summer 2014 offensive through Iraq, is the nature of the IS's adversaries, or the lack thereof. The predominate adversaries the IS has encountered are the Iraqi military, Kurdish fighters, Syrian opposition groups and Syrian government troops. The Iraqi military's troops have thus far not presented a significant challenge to the IS's authority. This is evident in the well-publicized retreat of 30,000 Iraqi soldiers during the IS's June 2014 advance towards Mosul.¹⁸³ Kurdish fighters, on the other hand, have proved a tougher adversary for the IS. Fighters from the Kurdish Peshmerga are generally touted as having higher morale, discipline and motivation than their Iraqi counterparts. The Peshmerga was successful in defending Erbil, a city in the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq. However, since the initial U.S. airstrikes were geared towards helping defend Erbil,¹⁸⁴ it is difficult to judge how the Peshmerga would have fared on their own. The impact of the United State's entrance into battle through airstrikes is outside the scope of this thesis.¹⁸⁵ Finally, Syrian opposition groups and Syrian government forces provide the last main form of

¹⁸³ John Beck, "Iraqi soldiers fleeing ISIS claim they were 'abandoned' by senior leadership," Vice News, 15 June 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/iraqi-soldiers-fleeing-isis-claim-they-were-abandoned-by-senior-officers>.

¹⁸⁴ Rod Nordland, and Helene Cooper, "Capitalizing on U.S. bombing, Kurds retake Iraqi towns," *The New York Times*, 10 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/11/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=0.

¹⁸⁵ There have been some indications that the IS has reverted back to insurgency/guerilla style fighting, versus conventional military tactics due to airstrikes: al-'Ubaydi, et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 44.

opposition to the IS. Numerous Syrian opposition groups have declared war on the IS.¹⁸⁶ Following the IS's successful expansion to Anbar province in Iraq in early 2014, the IS was successfully able to defeat Syrian opposition groups and gain territory in Eastern Syria.¹⁸⁷ As the IS continues to expand further in Syria, it will likely encounter resistance from Syrian opposition and Syrian army troops. Due to the lack of a strong military adversary, the question arises of whether the IS has been successful at acquiring territory due to actual military strength and strategy, or rather as a product of fortuitous circumstances and opportunistic thinking. A lack of a serious opponent makes it difficult to judge how effective the IS's "conventional" and insurgency tactics are, if put to the test. Regardless, the IS has proved it has been able to craft a tactics that take advantage of the circumstances availed to it on the battlefield. Presence of a strong military opponent notwithstanding, so far, this has proved a fairly successful strategy. Unfortunately, definitions of *de facto* sovereignty do not explicitly dictate the degree of effective military control an aspiring state must possess in order to also possess *de facto* sovereignty.

4.7 Support Operations and Capabilities

Successful militaries are equally dependent on their support operations (such as intelligence and logistics) as they are on tactics. The IS does have presence of an intelligence capacity that works closely with its military.¹⁸⁸ The IS's Security and Intelligence Council is responsible for eliminating threats to al-Baghdadi, and

¹⁸⁶ Joshua Landis, "The battle between ISIS and Syria's rebel militias," The Clairon Project, 4 January 2014, accessed 15 January 2015, <http://www.clarionproject.org/research/battle-between-isis-and-syria's-rebel-militias>.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State", 13.

¹⁸⁸ al-'Ubaydi et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 18.

maintaining his physical security.¹⁸⁹ This council also conducts operations throughout the IS's territory. The Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point has indicated that the IS has made strides in “designing and developing intelligence practices to assist its military, financial and governance activities.”¹⁹⁰ However, due to the generally secretive nature of intelligence capabilities, little information has been released to the public thus far regarding this aspect of the IS's operations.

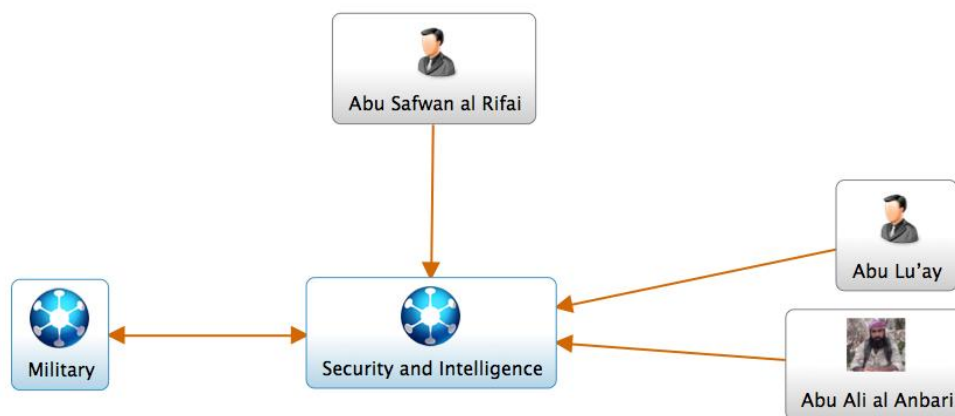


Figure 12: Network Analysis-The Islamic State Intelligence and Security Council

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015

The IS's Intelligence and Security Council ultimately maintains the security, and therefore, functionality of the executive, since it allows the Caliph to continue performing his duties as leader. Additionally, this council allows the IS to continue its state making actions, because it provides information on rivals that are operating within the IS's

¹⁸⁹ Richard Barrett, “The Islamic State,” 31.

¹⁹⁰ al-‘Ubaydi, et al., “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State,” 74.

territory to both the political and military wings. This allows the IS to maintain its authority by neutralizing or eliminating these rivals that may threaten its governance. The integration between the IS's intelligence capacity, military and political structure was demonstrated in the IS's attack on Mosul. Prior to the attack, the IS gathered intelligence information about the Iraqi security forces' ability to control Mosul's periphery through repeated attacks on border guards and checkpoints.¹⁹¹ Once again, this demonstrates the high level of coordination found within the IS military and political structures.

As mentioned many times throughout this chapter, the IS's command of logistics to move its manpower and resources is evident. From moving fighters to moving weapons, the IS has proven capable of fighting on numerous fronts, and adequately allocating resources to these fronts as necessary. For example, a report from Conflict Armament Research details weapons and ammunition seized from the IS between mid June and early August 2014, noting, "the speed of [weapons] transfer to Ayn al-Arab demonstrates the logistical competence of Islamic State forces."¹⁹² Finally, the IS has demonstrated that it is also willing to coordinate and negotiate militarily with other groups it had previously considered enemies. The IS has established military alliances with Sunni factions.¹⁹³ To some degree, this shows that the IS military is willing to be flexible, and also enter into relations with those it sees as important in continuing its military objectives.

¹⁹¹ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 17.

¹⁹² "Dispatch from the Field: Islamic State Weapons in Iraq and Syria-Analysis of weapons and ammunition captured from Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria," *Conflict Armament Research*, September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, http://conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Dispatch_IS_Iraq_Syria_Weapons.pdf.

¹⁹³ Charles Lister, "Profiling the Islamic State," 20.



Figure 13: Infographic on attack data published in the March 2014 *al Naba* report

Source: Bilger, Alex. "ISIS Annual Reports Reveal a Metrics-Driven Military Command." Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder. 22 May 2014.

Finally, it is worth noting that it appears the IS is placing considerable effort into keeping military records of the type and number of attacks it conducts in different provinces. It has published two metrics reports, the first in August 2013, and the second

in March 2014, which catalogue data on the attacks conducted in Iraq. The reports, titled *al Naba (the Report)*, list 18 different types of attacks and the frequency they were used in different areas.¹⁹⁴ Although it can be safely assumed that these reports serve as propaganda for the IS's military success, they also demonstrate that the IS is collecting detailed reports on where and how it is conducting attacks. Maintaining records on this data is important for the IS to evaluate its past successes and failures, and improve their means of conducting attacks in the future.

Through its use of both conventional and insurgency tactics, the IS, in the majority of its territory, has secured a monopoly on the use of violence. This tenet of statehood is incredibly important in demonstrating who has the authority in a given territory, and if this authority can be maintained. The IS's military is under the command of experienced leaders, and has instituted tactics that, given the battlefield situation, have generally proven successful and applicable on many fronts. Military operations receive support from intelligence and logistical capabilities, and are sustained by recruitment and training programs. Like all the IS's activities, it is generally difficult to discern how widely all of these activities are implemented throughout its territory and command structure. However, the fact that these ways and means to using and sustaining a military force exist, goes great lengths in proving that the IS is a complex organization, and that in many respects, it operates in a *de facto* capacity. Once again, however, the lack of clarity regarding the specific amount of control a political entity must possess in order to achieve *de facto* statehood makes it difficult to accurately characterize the IS. However, the IS once again does follow the definition of a Class II HSE.

¹⁹⁴ Alex Bilger, "ISIS Annual Reports Reveal a Metrics-Driven Military Command," Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder, 22 May 2014.

CHAPTER 5: FINANCING THE ISLAMIC STATE

The IS, like any organization, requires money to fund its activities. Thus far, it has managed to raise enough money, both through legitimate and illegitimate sources, to cover its operating costs. Generally, most states generate revenue through legitimate legal means, such as investments, loans, bonds and especially taxes. As of June 2014, the IS was estimated to have \$1.3-2 billion in assets.¹⁹⁵ This is more than GDP of several small countries, including the Falkland Islands, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands.¹⁹⁶ IS has been successful in its military campaigns and political activities, in part, due to the vast resources it draws from to fund its activities.

5.1 The Finance Council

The Finance Council is the overarching authority regarding the IS's financial transactions, and answers to the IS's central leadership. Although not a great deal is known about the Finance Council, it can be safely assumed that the council implements directives regarding the IS's finances, acquisition of resources and payroll of the IS's employees, among other tasks. The existence of a payroll system demonstrates that the IS has deemed administration important to its operational success, and is willing to devote personnel and resources to assumedly perfecting a historically effective method of

¹⁹⁵ Martin Chulov, "How an arrest in Iraq revealed Isis's \$2bn jihadist network," *The Guardian*, 15 June 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/iraq-isis-arrest-jihadists-wealth-power>.

¹⁹⁶ John Haltiwanger, "ISIS is worth \$2 billion, and makes more money than most of your favorite companies," *Elite Daily*, 18 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://elitedaily.com/news/politics/isis-is-worth-two-billion/762752/>.

understanding the demographics of its fighters and employees.

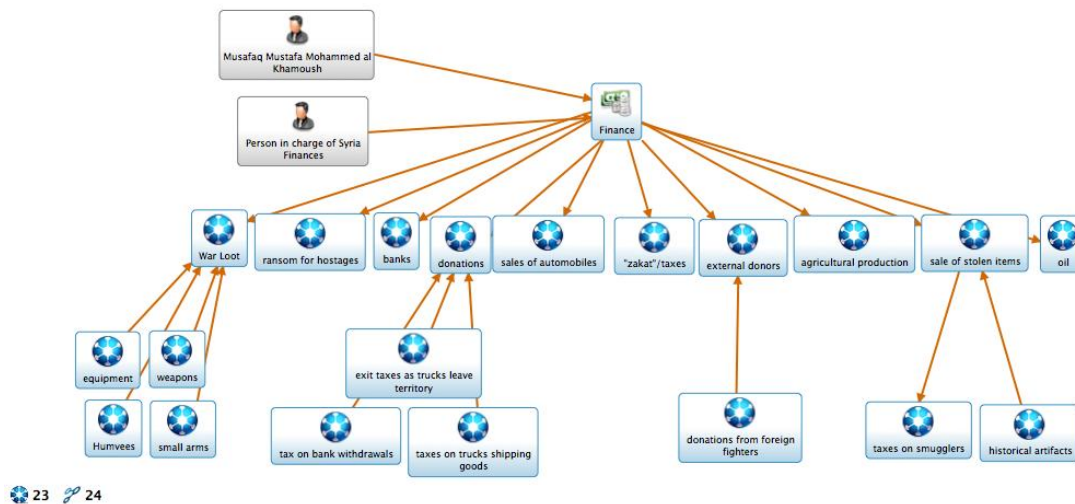


Figure 14: Network Analysis-Islamic State Finance

Source: Zook, Leigh Anne. 2015.

The IS's administrative capacity in maintaining extensive records of its personnel activities and payroll, is highly notable, as this is not a new trend; conversely the IS and its predecessor organizations have kept formal records of its employees, employees salaries, and employees families and living locations. The Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point analyzed 153 declassified managerial and financial documents captured in Iraq from 2005-2010, mostly from AQI and the ISI.¹⁹⁷ These documents contained numerous detailed Microsoft Excel spreadsheets on personnel information and payments made to fighters, and therefore highlight the central role played by the organization's administrative personnel.¹⁹⁸ Also found in these documents were attempts on behalf of

¹⁹⁷ Danielle Jung, Pat Ryan, Jacob Shapiro, and Jon Wallace, "Managing a Transitional Insurgency: The Islamic State of Iraq's 'Paper Trail,' 2005-2010," Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 15 December 2014, 2.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 17.

AQI administrators to attempt to curb possible corruption within the organization, leading to charts of statistical calculations.¹⁹⁹ These concerns regarding corruption ultimately resulted in internal discussions regarding changes in the ISI's organizational chart in 2008.²⁰⁰ Although it is impossible to determine if these proposed changes were actually implemented, or how similar the IS's current organizational structure is to the proposed changes of its predecessor organizations, it demonstrates the complexity and depth to which AQI and the ISI's financial administration operated. Likewise, the IS today can be assumed to operate in a similar, if not more complex, manner.

الكتيبة القسم	القوة القتالية	عدد الأطفال	عدد الزوجات	الراجلين	عدد أطفال الراجلين	عدد زوجات الراجلين
تصنيع الإلكتروني	10	18	8			
الكتيبة الإدارية	21	57	23			
سرية التمويل	13	33	14			
سرية الراجلين	6	14	6			
سرية إدارية	7	25	6			
كتيبة أبو ميسرة العريب الإعلامية	36	29	17			
سرية إعلامية مستقلة	2	0	0			
كتيبة الشيخ أبو يحيى الليبي التوعوية	14	26	10			
كتيبة أبو طلحة الحمداني فك الله امره	88	152	66			
كتيبة التجميع	12	14	11			
كتيبة التصنيع العسكري	20	61	16			
كتيبة الشيخ أبو عبد الله الكردي رحمة الله	64	109	45			
كتيبة الشيخ أبو مصعب الزرقاوي رحمة الله	59	110	51			
سرية المشايخ المسروبة (محمود حديد)	5	13	5			
الجند الراجلين	0	0	0	633	1478	489
الإجمالي	357	661	278	633	1478	489

البيان	الأطفال	الزوجات	نسبة الأطفال	نسبة الزوجات
المقاتلين	661	278	0.31	0.36
الراجلين	1478	489	0.69	0.64
الإجمالي	2139	767		

Figure 15: The Islamic State in Iraq's corruption calculations

Source: al-'Ubaydi, Lahoud, Milton and Price. "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State." December 2014.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 19.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 20.

Battalion/Section	Combat Force	Number of Children	Number of Spouses	The Deceased	Number of Children of the deceased	Number of Widowers
Electronic Industrialization	10	18	8			
Administrative Battalion	21	57	23			
Financing Company	13	33	14			
Deceased Company	6	14	6			
Administrative Company	7	25	6			
Media Battalion of Sheikh Abu-Maysarah al-Gharib	36	29	17			
Independent Media Company	2	0	0			
Shur'i [Legal and Religious] Battalion of Abu-Yahya al-Libi	14	26	10			
Battalion of Abu-Talhah al-Hamdani, may Allah release him	88	152	66			
VBIEDs Rigging Battalion	12	14	11			
Military Industrialization Battalion	20	61	16			
Battalion of Sheikh Abu-'Abdallah al-Kurdi, may his soul rests in peace	64	109	45			
Battalion of Sheikh Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi may his soul rests in peace	59	110	51			
Desert Warehouses Company (Mahmud Hadid)	5	13	5			
Deceased Soldiers	0	0	0	633	1478	489
Total	357	661	278	633	1478	489

Report	Children	Spouses	Children Ratio	Spouses Ratio
Fighters	661	278	0.31	0.36
Deceased	1478	489	0.69	0.64
Total	2139	767		

Figure 16: Translation of Figure 15

Source: al-'Ubaydi, Lahoud, Milton and Price. "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State." December 2014.

Maintaining extensive records and a paper trail provides continuity for the IS's operations over time, as changes on the battlefield occur. Additionally, this allows the organization to retain core structures and principles, as well as its capability to operate in a diminished capacity, even when populations turn against it, as was the case from 2007 to 2010.²⁰¹ It would be ignorant to assume that the IS is not keeping similar, if not more extensive, records than those it was using when it operated as AQI and the ISI. The existence of such records demonstrate that the IS is a complex organization, with high levels of administrative and bureaucratic organization which allow it to impose its governance and thus accomplish its goals.

²⁰¹ Ibid 5.

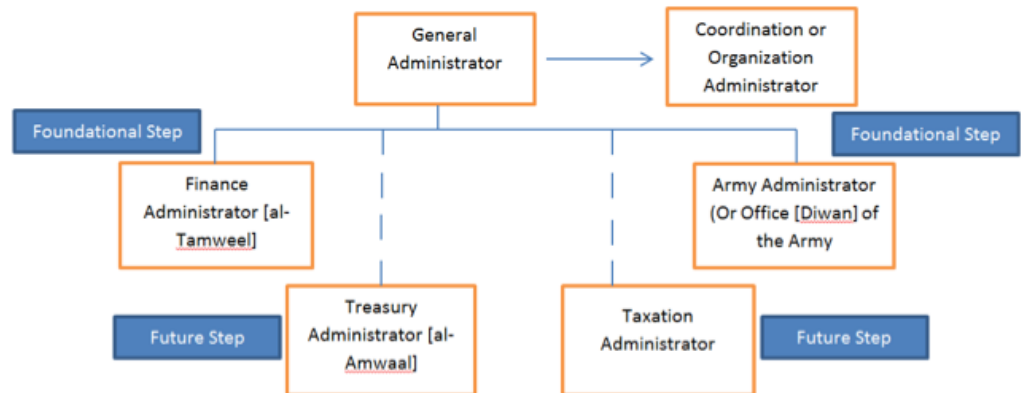
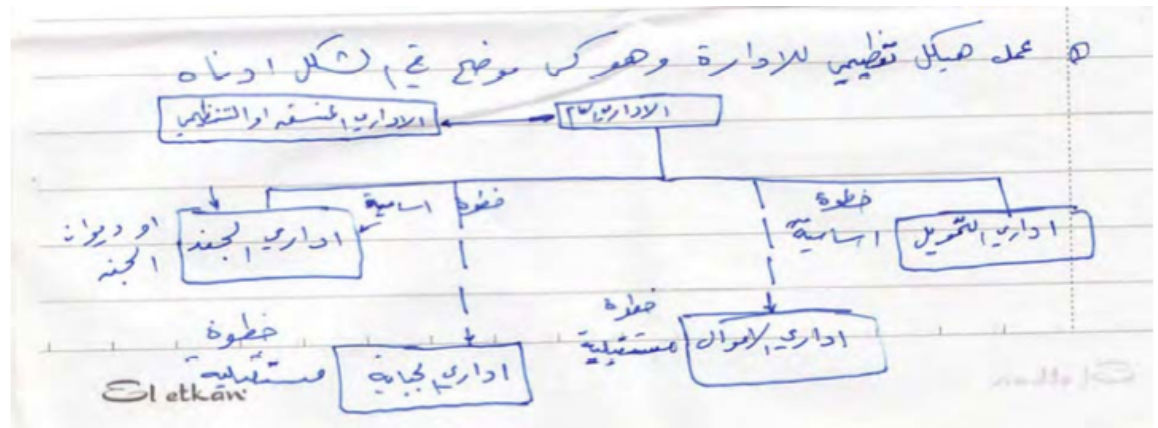


Figure 17: The Islamic State in Iraq’s proposed changes, and translation

Source: al-‘Ubaydi, Lahoud, Milton and Price. “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State.” December 2014.

The existence of a Finance Council rooted in a historical administrative capacity is integral for demonstrating that the IS is committed to organizing a multi-faceted financial system. Because the IS has implemented such a system in the past as AQI and the ISI, it does not need to “reinvent the wheel” so to speak regarding its administrative record-keeping, but merely improve what it has built in the past. Furthermore, a focus on creating records demonstrates that the IS does not see itself as a temporary organization. Establishing records regarding employees’ marital status, number of dependents, location of residence, employment type, and salary is incredibly reminiscent of a conventional state’s census. Putting effort and resources into collecting and recording demographic

information of fighters could be logically expanded to include all of the IS's employees (and not just fighters, for instance), and even populations under the IS's control in the future. Such detailed demographic information is incredibly important from the standpoint of a government that is trying to understand the populations under its control and likewise how to best allocate resources and services to their population. An organization focused on maintaining governance in the long-term would therefore find such information necessary for their present and future activities.

5.2 Expenses

Expenses for the IS revolve around two main categories: paying for personnel and purchasing items necessary for it to continue operations. Paying personnel includes making payments to fighters, paying the salaries of the IS's administrative employees, and paying salaries of local employees. Compensation for fighters includes paying money to fighters per month, as well to families if the fighters die in battle.²⁰² Estimates for fighters' salaries range from \$200 to \$600 per month. Traditionally, the ISI's payment for fighters varies depending on region.²⁰³ Furthermore, when the ISI's payments to fighters in 2006-2007 were analyzed, the monetary compensation for fighters was found to be much lower than their expected marginal product of labor. Additionally, payments did

²⁰² Ibid, 16.

²⁰³ Marium Karouny, "In northeast Syria, Islamic State builds a government," *Reuters*, 6 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/04/us-syria-crisis-raqqa-insight-idUSKBN0GZ0D120140904?irpc=932>.

Danielle Jung, Pat Ryan, Jacob Shapiro, and Jon Wallace, "Managing a Transitional Insurgency: The Islamic State of Iraq's 'Paper Trail,' 2005-2010," *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, 15 December 2014, 22.

Benjamin Bahney, Radha Iyengar, Patrick Johnston, Danielle Jung, Jacob Shapiro and Howard Shatz, "Insurgent compensation: Evidence from Iraq," *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2013, 103(3): 518-522.

not reflect the amount of risk fighters might incur by fighting in specific regions.²⁰⁴

Although this does not appear to be the case today, it is possible that the IS could be willing to reduce payments to fighters in the future. Paying the fighters at a lower cost could signal the commitment level of fighters.²⁰⁵ That is, fighters that are truly devoted to the IS would be willing to accept lower compensation in order to prove their loyalty. This could help the IS to screen fighters that could pose problems in the future, and only retain fighters truly committed to the cause. Offering a ‘life insurance’ policy of sorts for fighters’ families, by paying per child, serves the dual purpose of making up for low initial salaries, as well as signal commitment on behalf of the IS to its fighters.²⁰⁶

Essentially, the IS demonstrates that it values its fighters by showing willingness to spend resources on the fighters’ families. At this point, it is not clear if the IS actually follows through on making payments to deceased fighters’ families. However, the fact the organization has historically been willing to spend less than expected on fighter salaries is certainly an important point for considering the IS’s willingness to pay fighters in the future, or how much of the IS’s resources are being devoted to fighter payments versus other facets of their activities.

In addition to paying fighters’ salaries, the IS must also pay for regional governors and their respective administrators, as well as national level administrators.

The amount the IS pays to these individuals is estimated to be between \$300 to \$2,000, and if a form of regional governance exists in each of the IS’s 18 provinces, this totals to

²⁰⁴ Benjamin Bahney, Radha Iyengar, Patrick Johnston, Danielle Jung, Jacob Shapiro and Howard Shatz, “Insurgent compensation: Evidence from Iraq,” *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2013, 103(3): 518-522.

²⁰⁵ Patrick Johnston and Benjamin Bahney, “Hit the Islamic State’s Pocketbook,” *RAND*, 6 October 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2014/10/hit-the-islamic-states-pocketbook.html>.

²⁰⁶ Benjamin Bahney, Radha Iyengar, Patrick Johnston, Danielle Jung, Jacob Shapiro and Howard Shatz, “Insurgent compensation: Evidence from Iraq,” *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2013, 103(3): 518-522.

a fairly significant amount.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, since these administrators are necessary to keep the government functioning, it is unlikely that if future budget cuts were needed, the IS would stop regional administrators salaries. It seems more logical to first cut salaries of local workers who are not directly employed by the IS administration. For example, the IS continues to let workers at the Raqqa dam retain their jobs and assumedly pays the workers.²⁰⁸ Willingness to pay salaries of employees, fighters and workers demonstrates the IS's commitment to maintaining jobs necessary to keep the territory they control functioning.

The other category of the IS's expenses include purchasing materials necessary to continue the IS's activities, both in military and civilian sectors. This includes buying and maintaining military equipment, purchasing building materials for creating, constructing and maintaining infrastructure and services, maintaining and fixing key production sources (like oil refineries), paying bribes to necessary officials and tribal leaders, and funding the IS's extensive propaganda campaign.²⁰⁹ Thus, the IS's theoretical organization serves as an indicator of *de facto* sovereignty, as strong organization of financial capabilities and record keeping would help to more effectively maintain effective control of the populations under the IS's control.

²⁰⁷ Harriet Alexander and Alastair Beach, "How Isil is funded, trained and operating in Iraq and Syria," *The Telegraph*, 23 August 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11052919/How-Isil-is-funded-trained-and-operating-in-Iraq-and-Syria.html>.

²⁰⁸ Mariam Karouny, "In northeast Syria, Islamic State builds a government," *Reuters*, 4 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/04/us-syria-crisis-raqqa-insight-idUSKBN0GZ0D120140904?irpc=932>.

"Islamic State issues wages to government employees in Mosul," *Middle East Eye*, 2 July 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/islamic-state-issues-wages-government-employees-mosul-550307624>.

²⁰⁹ Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland, "The Islamic State is a hybrid threat," *Small War Journal*, 1 December 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-islamic-state-is-a-hybrid-threat-why-does-that-matter>.

5.3 Revenue

The IS employs a number of means to raise funds to pay for its activities. Revenue is collected through selling natural resources, “taxing” the population, performing kidnappings and collecting outside donations. Since the IS controls the commodities and natural resources within its territory, it can decide to sell these resources to outside entities. Oil is the largest source of revenue for the IS. The IS produces and estimated 50,000 barrels of oil, and is able to sell each barrel of oil for between \$18-60.²¹⁰ The oil is smuggled to Iran, Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria and is sold to outside parties.²¹¹ Total oil revenues for the IS can only be estimated at this point, but the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point reported possible daily revenues for the IS range from \$720,000 to \$16,800,000 per day.²¹² It is likely that the IS will encounter problems in the future maintaining its quantities of oil production, as refineries require technical skills to adequately maintain equipment. Through its use of violence, the IS has generally driven out the majority of the professional class existing inside of its territory. Additionally, the IS’s education system does not include any vocational or technical training; so it is unlikely a new professional class will rise with the skills necessary to maintain technical equipment.

“Taxation” provides another large source of revenue for the IS. In the west this is often seen as extortion; however, the IS considers it religious taxation.²¹³ This “taxation” takes place in numerous forms. The IS requires payments from neighborhoods whose

²¹⁰ al-‘Ubaydi, et al., “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State,” 58.

²¹¹ Suleiman al-Khalidi, “Here’s how ISIS uses oil to fuel its advances,” *Business Insider*, 18 September 2014, accessed 10 January 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-how-islamic-state-uses-syrias-oil-to-fuel-its-advances-2014-9>.

²¹² al-‘Ubaydi, et al., “The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State,” 58.

²¹³ Ibid, 61.

residents are religious minorities, as well requires payments from various local businesses, which it construes as protection payments.²¹⁴ Additionally, the IS has implemented a fairly consistent tariff on trucks and shipments entering and leaving its territory.²¹⁵ This system taxes on trucks at an initial checkpoint, and issues drivers a paper receipt that can be used for other checkpoints along their route.²¹⁶ The presence of a taxation system that is applied constantly, as is in the case of the trucks, shows the high levels of organization in the IS's governance.

Kidnappings and collecting ransom money have also become a profitable enterprise for the IS. *The Telegraph* estimates that the IS has collected nearly \$65 million from high-profile kidnappings, such as that of four French hostages in 2014 which may have cost \$18 million.²¹⁷ Donations do make up some of the IS's revenue, but not a significant portion. In 2010 alone, donations from the Gulf are only estimated to have made up a mere 5% of the IS's revenue.²¹⁸ More contributions are actually made from donors in Iraq, rather than the Gulf, due to their close proximity to the IS's territory.²¹⁹ No states are known to provide direct funding to the IS.²²⁰

For the most part, the IS gathers revenue through "illegitimate" means in the eyes of the west, such as extortion rackets and selling black-market oil. However it should be noted that some legitimate sources of collecting revenue exist. Additionally, the IS seems capable of balancing its budget, so to speak, by bringing enough revenue to cover its

²¹⁴ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 48.

²¹⁵ al-'Ubaydi, et al., "The group that calls itself a state: understanding the evolution and changes of the Islamic State," 62.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Raheem Salman and Yara Bayoumyl, "Understanding where ISIS gets its funding," *The Daily Star*, 12 September 2014, 10 January 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Sep-12/270435-understanding-where-isis-gets-its-funding.ashx#axzz3F7XMZXac>.

²¹⁸ Richard Barrett, "The Islamic State," 48.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

operational costs. Thus far, the IS's ability to govern has not been hindered by a lack of funding. However, as operational costs increase, and the IS's ability to maintain its sources of revenue decrease, it will be increasingly difficult to maintain this standard.²²¹ Eventually, it is likely the IS will need to make cuts, which could negatively impact its future ability to functionally govern its territory, and therefore, undermine its authority as a political structure.

So long as the IS is able to cover operational costs, it will more easily be able to maintain effective control over its population and territory. The financial longevity in the long term is questionable at best, making it difficult to judge the degree to which the IS possesses *de facto* sovereignty. Class II HSE however, takes into account that an entity's effective control may waver and shift over time.

²²¹ There are indications that low gas prices are negatively impacting the IS's markets for oil: Geoff D. Porter, "CTC Perspectives: The Impact of Crude's Collapse on the Islamic State," Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 13 January 2015.

CONCLUSION

In many respects, the IS's characteristics and actions are very similar to those of recognized sovereign states. The IS has an organized political structure, which includes administrative capabilities, as well as cognizance for the need of establishing centralized and local-level governance throughout its territory. Learning from the shortcomings of its precursor organization, AQI, during the Iraq war, the IS has also provided numerous services to its population. This focus on providing basic commodities like electricity and water, as well as other services, to populations that formerly, under the Iraqi or Syrian government did not receive those services gives populations a pragmatic incentive to allow the IS's rule that compliments fears of brutal violence. This commitment to services and establishing local-level control over populations under IS control extends to military and economic objectives, as the IS includes key infrastructure and resources in its military objectives and uses its revenues to fund service projects and pay workers' salaries. Ultimately, the IS demonstrates the presence of numerous types of sovereignty, including Westphalian, domestic and interdependence sovereignty, as well as the state actions of war making and state making. Additionally, the IS also faces similar problems as do sovereign states. Although the IS has established short term goals and attempts to, for example, provide numerous services, it faces long term challenges in actually continuing to supply populations with basic services at current levels, problems with managing infrastructure and industry, and creating an educated professional class that is actually able to continue the IS's internal industries. The IS must maintain order within

its territory, as well as defend its new borders. Providing adequate compensation for the IS's employees, many of whom are foreign fighters, will become a concern when the IS's revenue dwindles due to mismanagement of key industries, such as oil refineries. Will, in the long term, the IS be able to reconcile budgetary constraints, expectant populations, flow of goods and services to disparaged populations, a strict and violent judicial and legislative system, and strong opposition from foreign superpowers? At the same time, the IS must also be recognized and viewed as a legitimate and viable "state" in the Islamic discourse. Furthermore, when attempting to evaluate the IS based on general definitions of *de facto* statehood, it is difficult to discern the degree to which external sovereignty exists. Another issue is the degree to which the IS must implement governance throughout all of its territory. Undoubtedly, the IS has stronger governance in different areas of its territory; its self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa, for instance, has numerous services, whereas populations on the outskirts of the IS's territorial holdings have considerably fewer. Ultimately, it is exceedingly difficult to determine if the IS is truly a *de facto* state, due to the lack of objective and specific criteria that dictates exactly how a non-state actor qualifies as a *de facto* state.

One of the most difficult problems faced in attempting to accurately characterize the IS is the lack of a term which adequately defines the IS. The term "state" itself can characterize numerous types of behavior, and seems largely dependent on whether or not certain world powers desire recognition, rather than strict adherence to specific criteria. The IS does not fit the definitions of a traditional state, according to the Montevideo Convention, nor is it a traditional insurgency. The US military's proposed definition of a "hybrid threat" attempts to reconcile threats that encompass both conventional and

irregular forces, much like a non-state entity that exhibits both state-like and insurgency characteristics. Certainly the idea that entities that embody state-like characteristics and more insurgency-type capabilities is dually relevant and useful, but over-generalizing the term to the point it does not truly describe the entity in question defeats the purpose. Furthermore, the importance of correctly defining these “hybrid” actors has implications for US military and diplomatic actions. In his account of his Marine Corps reconnaissance unit in Vietnam, LTC Alex Lee describes a situation where one of his superiors questions terminology regarding helicopter assaults in an operations study titled “MARCOR-85,”

Was the figure driven by missile threat, air cover necessity, steaming room, etc., etc.? There was no answer, and with that parameter placed in a better context, everyone could look to the future with more flexibility. Arbitrary numbers must never dictate development of doctrine [...] words have meanings, and those meanings must be applicable to the problem under study. From such mundane matters are battles won.²²²

As aptly stated by LTC Lee, wars are fought and waged based on word-based definitions. Poor definitions have the potential to hinder state interactions with “hybrid” actors that are generically characterized or oversimplified. For this reason, using the terminology of “Hybrid State Entity,” and its respective three classes, represents a more accurate depiction of the practical capabilities of modern non-state actors.

The IS best fits into the categorization as a Class II Hybrid State Entity. This is because the IS exhibits many characteristics of a *de facto* state, such as having control over the majority of its territory and population. It has created an economic system that,

²²² LT. Col. Alex Lee, *Force Recon Command*, (New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 1995) 11.

in the short term appears to be generating enough revenue to cover expenses. Within the IS's territory, there is little internal military or political opposition, but the IS's ability to project its power to the further expanses of its territory faces difficulty. Concluding that the IS is not a *de facto* state, and merely a non-state actor, would severely obscure the IS's success in implementing state-like governance across its territory. However, it should also be noted that the IS is not able to establish its governance equally across its territory. Terming the IS as a Class II Hybrid State Entity allows for the understanding that functionally, the IS is able to implement numerous facets of state building, while at the same time also failing to meet the criteria of being a sovereign state.

Determining an accurate way to define and characterize modern state and non-state entities has important practical ramifications relating to how these entities and their capabilities are perceived. The strength of defining non-state actors as Hybrid State Entities lies in recognizing that these entities can perform the same activities and demonstrate many of the same characteristics as sovereign states, yet are not recognized sovereign states. Terming non-state actors as entities other than states gives the connotation that these actors are fundamentally different than states, and therefore, cannot behave or operate as states do. As demonstrated by the IS, this is simply not the case in modern times. Practically, non-state entities, even extremist militant organizations, can behave very pragmatically in trying to secure their goals of territorial control. Refusing to acknowledge that the same processes states use to establish and maintain governance can likewise be used and embodied by non-state actors discounts the real life manifestations of these actors' actions. When military and diplomatic interactions come into play, as they usually do, developing strategies on how to deal with

these non-state actors should be based on practical actions, rather than generalizations indicated by poor definitions. Additionally, acknowledging that non-state actors may, in fact, more closely resemble sovereign states allows for acknowledgement that non-state actors can successfully operate in numerous categories outside of military capabilities, such as in politics and economics.

Understanding the multi-faceted nature of non-state actors is important for learning how to successfully interact with them, militarily and diplomatically. In the case of the IS, better conceptions of what the IS truly is and how it operates yields the observation that it is highly unlikely a bombing campaign, and no other means of attack, will completely destroy the IS. A strong and detailed organizational structure exists, which cannot be easily destroyed by bombing campaigns alone. Furthermore, the situation in which the IS was able to come to power in the territories it controls (that is, filling the power vacuum left by poor governance in Iraq and Syria), will not be solved by bombing or even removing, the IS. Finally, if the IS is able to cement its governance, and facilitate successful integration of local populations into the IS's employment and military structures, the lines between unwilling civilians coerced into the IS's service and military combatants begins to quickly blur. Given US President Obama's request to the US Congress on 11 February 2015 for the formal use of force against the IS,²²³ fully conceptualizing the IS's capabilities across multiple spectrums is of the utmost importance for the US in developing an effective strategy on how to interact with the IS.

²²³ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on Request to Congress for Authorization of Force Against ISIL," The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 11 February 2015, accessed 15 February 2015, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/11/remarks-president-request-congress-authorization-force-against-isil>.

APPENDIX A: ABBREVIATIONS

AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSE	Hybrid State Entity
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IS	Islamic State
ISI	Islamic State in Iraq
ISIL	Islamic State in Syria and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in the Sham
IW	Irregular Warfare
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
TW	Traditional Warfare
UN	The United Nations
US	The United States of America
VBIED	Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive Device

APPENDIX B: NETWORK ANALYSIS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

An online version of the visual network analysis of the Islamic State is found on the University of Mississippi Center for Intelligence and Security Studies website at: <http://www.ciss-space.com/ISNA>.²²⁴

In the author's experience researching an accurate depiction of how the IS is functionally organized and operates on a daily basis, it quickly became apparent that a comprehensive chart accurately depicting the IS was lacking among existing scholarship. For this reason, the author combined information from numerous reports and existing charts into one holistic network analysis using Semantica Professional 5.5 software. Due to the ongoing and tenuous nature of the events surrounding the IS (i.e. the death of key leaders and individuals, organizational structure changes, difficulty of checking reported information against events actually occurring on the ground, etc.), this chart does not attempt to maintain complete accuracy of the IS's organizational structure. Rather, this chart's goal is to serve as a depiction to the reader as to the general and theoretical organizational structure of the IS. Furthermore, the author's intent for this chart is to serve as a baseline framework for adding additional details, individuals, locations, etc., as the IS continues to evolve, in order to provide the most accurate picture of the organization and its practical capabilities presently and in the future.

²²⁴ For any difficulties accessing this webpage, please contact the University of Mississippi Center for Intelligence and Security Studies by email at ciss@olemiss.edu or by phone +1 (662) 915-1953.

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